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*THE PALADIN.*¹

AS BEHELD BY A WOMAN OF TEMPERAMENT.

BY HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

CHAPTER III.

WE MOVE AMONGST MUMMERS.

HENRY FITZROY was beloved by half the women in England. Indeed, enthusiastic young ladies constituted an order, the independent order of the K.O.H. The capitals stood for 'Keen on Henry,' or 'Keen Order of Henryites.' Members wore a pretty badge with the mystic letters intertwined in a cipher encircled by the motto 'One and Only,' executed in blue and white enamel. Lest respectable, old-fashioned folk should be unduly shocked, let us hasten to add that these devoted maidens worshipped at a distance. The glamour of the footlights lay between them and their god. The existence of the order is recorded merely to indicate a personality and to give the lie direct to those who assert that integrity, altruism, and untarnished honour are moribund in this kingdom. Henry inspired ardours in Upper Tooting and even in Sauchiehall Street because he was good and unselfish and noble, always the perfect gentleman. His manners were as carefully creased as his trousers; his language as discreetly selected as his cravats. When he left the stage, which was seldom, maiden aunts nudged each other and whispered 'That is what I call a—Man!'

Esther saw him between the third and fourth acts of a play

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which had been running for nearly a year. She went to the theatre alone, going first to the box office and thence to the stage door, where the janitor stared curiously at her black clothes and white face.

She was ushered into a comfortably furnished sitting-room. The curtains between it and a dressing-room were not drawn, so Esther was able to see a brilliantly lighted table covered with the usual articles of make-up, and on the walls different costumes ready to the hand of the dresser.

Esther sat down in the sitting-room, and the dresser, after a careful scrutiny, drew the curtains. She examined the different portraits of FitzRoy, delicately framed and mounted. What a number of parts he had played ! And how amazingly he preserved his own identity, never merged in that of his part ! He remained the One and Only. In a drawing-room nobody had ever been known to mistake him for Jones or Robinson. Railway porters, who had never seen him on the stage, touched their hats to him, because, having access to the illustrated papers, they recognised at once his finely cut features and penetrating glance. Every schoolgirl knew that his teeth were white because he used Bodol.

He came in two minutes later, warm but slightly frigid in manner, although very polite. He regretted that he had kept Miss Yorke waiting, but he was now at her service for *ten* minutes. The emphasis on the numeral served to remind Esther that she had asked for five.

‘If a man asks for five pounds do you give him ten ?’ she said.

Without waiting for his answer, she explained her errand. FitzRoy listened, leaning his square chin upon his hand and giving careful attention to her voice and face. When she had finished he murmured :

‘You have had no experience ?’

‘Only as an amateur.’

‘And you ask for my advice ?’

She nodded, smiling nervously. FitzRoy began to speak in the monotone so effective on the stage, because it indicates commonsense, proportion, justice, good breeding—qualities highly esteemed by the stalls and dress circle. He spoke as a bishop might speak at his club, not didactically, but with authority, conveying the conviction of knowledge and experience suppressed. Even in moments of passion the critics were of opinion that Henry had ‘something up his sleeve.’

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'You are young, keen, clever, and you say you must earn your living. Try to earn it anywhere except in a theatre.'

'Oh, Mr. FitzRoy!'

'If I had a daughter I should say the same thing to her. Do you know that mine is the only profession out of which the leading men and women try to keep their own girls? Isn't that fact significant?'

'But the girls go on all the same.'

'True. Well, Miss Yorke, I can give you a line to Johnson, who will, perhaps, take you as a pupil. After a year or two with him come back to me.'

'But Mr. Johnson never appears in London?'

'Never! His pupils do. Then there is Miss Jagg, the sister of Charles and Laura Jagg. She has a dramatic academy just round the corner. My card will do for Miranda. Choose—letter or card? Or shall we say both?'

'You are very kind.'

'On the contrary, I'm aiding and abetting a misdemeanour. There! Good-night and good luck!'

She found herself at the stage door, with a breeze from the river cooling her hot cheeks. The night was fine, so she decided to walk home. How Harry would fume if he knew! And yet, sooner or later, she must learn to walk alone through London streets. She started, chin in air, looking neither to right nor left. Within a couple of minutes she had reached Piccadilly Circus.

So far her progress had been swift and free, because she had approached the great thoroughfare from side streets. Now she was constrained to move slowly and with caution. Crossing the Circus a policeman held up his hand. She and those about her stood still while carriages and cabs rolled swiftly by. Scores of times she had glanced from her father's brougham and seen kaleidoscopically the variegated, patient crowd, the blur of colour and form which she knew to be the human tide arrested for a moment by the uplifted hand of the law, but soon to flow on, restless and omnipotent, percolating everywhere, solid and fluid, abstract and concrete, good and evil.

To-night she realised that she belonged to the crowd, was in it and of it. She seemed to have stepped from a hilltop to the plain, from the select few to the undistinguished many; and for the moment she lost the sense of identity. Beside her stood a girl about her own age, pretty, graceful, but unmistakably belonging

to the class described by police-court reporters as 'unfortunate.' She eyed Esther with curiosity. Then she said pleasantly 'Nice night, isn't it?' Esther blushed to the roots of her hair. The tone, the glance, implied equality.

'Yes, it's very fine,' she stammered. The girl started, and beneath the paint Esther saw the blood flow swiftly to her chin and temples.

'I beg your pardon,' she said nervously. 'I d-didn't know; I'm very sorry.'

Esther touched the other's arm.

'Don't!' she said quickly. 'Why should you be sorry? Why shouldn't you speak to me?'

The policeman lowered his hand; the crowd swept on; Esther lost sight of her companion.

She stood still for an instant, and perceived that a man was approaching her. She felt her knees tremble; a lump formed itself in her throat. If this man spoke to her, she might faint, or scream, or do something incredibly silly. Her eyes met his appealingly, and yet he came on, like a sort of Juggernaut.

'Are you ill? Can I help you?'

He raised his hat.

'If you would call a hansom,' she faltered.

As the hansom drew up he said 'I am a doctor; I thought you were going to faint.'

'I felt faint,' Esther answered, 'but I'm all right now. Will you kindly tell the man to drive me to Palace Gardens?' The doctor looked astounded, but obeyed. He lifted his hat for the second time as the hansom began to move, and Esther was left with a vivid impression of a thin, pale, clean-shaven face, keen blue eyes, and a broad, dominating forehead. She lay back against the cushions.

Upon the following morning, at half-past ten, she called upon Miranda Jagg. Miranda—everybody called her Miranda—received her in a faded pink dressing-gown. She wore green carpet slippers and spectacles. Through these beamed a pair of bright, quizzical eyes. Esther presented the One and Only's card.

'Did Henry say anything about my terms?'

'Not a word, Miss Jagg.'

They vary. You're a swell, eh?'

'Nothing of the sort.'

'But you've money——' Her sharp eyes appraised every article of clothing.

'I'm nearly penniless. I'm the daughter of—of Mr. Douglas Yorke.'

'My dear, I never heard of him. I'm the most ignorant woman in the world. I can act, and I can teach the right sort how to act. I never read anything but theatrical news.'

'I hope you'll find me the right sort.'

'Haven't said I'll take you yet. I'm particular—always was. The grandchild of Charles James Bean has a right to be.'

'You are Charles Bean's grandchild?'

'Didn't you know? And once I played Juliet. Ah—ha! And my last part was the Nurse. I walked all round 'em! I'm a better actress than my sister Laura, but she has kept her figure.'

She winked her eye, and held out a pretty dimpled hand.

'Nothing left but that,' she added.

'I do hope you'll take me.'

'Sit down,' said Miss Jagg trenchantly. Esther did so. 'I'll take you,' said this remarkable woman. 'You can sit down properly; I shan't have to teach you that; and you've a decent voice and you put your clothes on properly. But, Lord bless you! thousands can do that. Can't sing or dance, eh?'

'No.'

'Just as well. You might be tempted to go for musical comedy. Want to begin at once, eh?'

'Please.'

'You're always in a hurry,' grumbled Miranda.

'And your terms, Miss Jagg?'

'We'll talk about that this day week. If you shape well—— Don't worry about the cash part! If you mean biz that'll be all right.'

'I do mean biz,' Esther replied valiantly.

'Some of 'em will be here at eleven. You can watch us at work if you like. See if you can spot the promising ones. Have a cig?'

'No, thanks,' said Esther politely.

Miranda lighted a cigarette and began to talk volubly of past triumphs. This was her weakness.

'If you had seen me as Olivia—— But I shone brightest in Shakespeare. Portia, Beatrice, Kate the Shrew, Lady Macbeth, Ophelia—I've played 'em all, my dear. Don't make any

mistake, the lot you know can't act as we did. Most of 'em ain't fit to carry a flag in a pantomime. And think of our training! Lawsy! didn't we work, too. I've rehearsed for ten hours at a stretch. Do you admire my brother Charles very much?'

She never stopped talking about herself and her illustrious family till her pupils had begun to arrive.

Work—as the pupils called it—lasted for two hours. Miranda held Esther spellbound. Gestures, voice, expression, were inimitable. The pupils being unable to mimic her, she mimicked them, but so delicately, with such irresistible drollery, that none took offence. One girl, older than the others, was praised and exalted as an example. Esther noticed her, because she had a beautiful face upon which suffering was writ large. Everybody addressed her as Miss Lovell, and not till afterwards did Esther discover that her Christian name was Sabrina. Thrice Miranda appealed directly to her: 'How does that strike you, Miss Lovell?' or 'Could you improve that pose?' Sabrina answered in an emotionless voice, but with real critical ability, and each time Miranda nodded, exclaiming 'Yes, yes, yes—you are quite right!' After two hours the others hurried off, but Sabrina remained to be introduced to Esther. Miranda said 'Miss Yorke wants to become an actress. Do talk to her, and tell her about yourself. It's a black-and-white sketch she'll give you,' she added, turning to Esther and showing a row of magnificent teeth in a broad genial smile. 'What did you think of my "star" class?'

'You frightened me more than you frightened them, Miss Jagg.'

'I shall go easy with you, my dear. They're actors and actresses—at least that's what they call themselves.'

'You have played in public?' said Esther to Sabrina.

'For more than five years.'

'I'm off for my chop and pint of stout,' declared Miranda. 'Come again at four, Miss Yorke, and see the duffers. Ta ta!'

She whirled out of the room.

'Will you lunch with me?' said Sabrina gravely. 'I belong to a small women's club near here.' Esther smiled and accepted, murmuring:

'Does Miss Jagg lunch out in a pink dressing-gown and carpet slippers?'

Sabrina explained. Miranda lived in three little rooms above the large room where she held her classes.

'She hardly ever goes out,' Sabrina added. 'We give her

all the exercise she needs, and when she wants fresh air she sits by an open window.'

The girls walked through Covent Garden into King Street. Sabrina led the way into one of the old Georgian houses, where her club had lately installed itself. A simple lunch was ordered and consumed. Coffee followed. Then Sabrina said abruptly 'Why are you going on the stage?' When some of the reasons were given, she nodded reflectively, but said nothing. Esther, in her turn, asked 'Why do you take lessons from Miss Jagg?'

'Because she can teach me a lot and because she may get me a London engagement.'

'You have never had a London engagement?'

'Never. You look surprised.'

'But you act so well, you——'

'Please go on! Tell me all the nice things you are thinking about me. I like you already, but I shall like you twice as much if you tell me I'm clever and——'

She paused, smiling. Esther promptly filled in the word 'beautiful.'

'I was beautiful,' Sabrina said seriously. 'Three years at fifteen shillings a week have printed some ugly lines on my face.'

'Fifteen shillings!' Esther gasped.

'I was with Johnson, serving my apprenticeship. I don't complain; I learned a lot. When I left him, and went on my own, I nearly starved. Now I'm rich. I've one hundred and fifty pounds a year—three pounds a week for ever and ever. I hope you have at least that.' She glanced at Esther's dress. 'What a silly question! You spend twice as much on your frocks.'

'I have five hundred pounds,' replied Esther slowly, 'a lot of clothes which I can't wear because I'm, as you see, in deep mourning, some jewellery, and a little furniture.'

'Oh!' said Sabrina.

Esther did not add (because she did not know) that the five hundred pounds had been subscribed for her by her father's creditors. It was a small sum, but considering the unhappy difference between the late banker's assets and liabilities not an ungenerous one.

'But you must have heaps of friends, Miss Yorke?'

Esther considered, answering deliberately.

'I'm cutting loose. Some have been very kind. Could I accent their hospitality and reject their advice?'

Sabrina laughed.

'You could, but you're the sort that wouldn't. Of course they advised you to keep off the boards? Sound advice, too. Well, I cut loose from a country parsonage. Waiter! The bill!'

This was the beginning of a friendship destined to mean much to Esther. It ripened slowly. Perhaps on each side there was the apprehension that disappointment might be lurking behind every milestone on the road. Dorothea Treherne had left London without meeting Esther again. She had called, but Esther, convinced—and not unreasonably—that a scene was impending, had returned a Roland for an Oliver. Mrs. Treherne was informed that Miss Yorke was 'not at home,' and so two women who might have been a joy and solace to each other were driven apart by the irony of circumstance.

The season being at an end, Lady Matilda had begun her annual round of visits. She was at Cowes, and Harry was at Ostend. He had felt that he must put the deep blue sea between himself and this obstinate, headstrong creature whom he adored. At the time, therefore, when Esther removed from Palace Gardens to Bloomsbury, neither Harry nor his sister was in town. Sabrina, fortunately, had a large experience of landladies and a genius for economy. Esther, on the other hand, had a genius as marked for expenditure: her extravagance horrified the girl who had lived on fifteen shillings a week.

We must record a scene between the lovers upon the eve of Harry's departure for Ostend. It might have been so charming and romantic; it turned out so much the reverse. All the blame cannot be laid on the man. The *rôle* of mouse was forced upon him, and you must never forget that ugly twins stood between him and forty thousand a year. When he left Eton he had reason to believe that he might aspire to a Lord Lieutenancy at least; the office was hereditary in the Rye family. Gazing at himself through a magnifying glass, beholding with complacency a figure of heroic size, the assurance of the editor of the popular sporting magazine was not needed to emphasise the admitted fact that he looked 'One of the Best.'

Behold him on his knees before a chit of twenty!

Of course he wanted her. The soft touch of her lips had driven prudence to Timbuctoo. He wanted her—at once. Special licences loomed in his mind. To make a Gretna Green affair of it would have been unadulterated bliss.

And she, the heartless creature, darkened his day by prattling inconsequently of to-morrow. She hurled at him some saw out of the philosophies : ' Happiness must be earned to be enjoyed,' a lie on the face of it. Who so happy as children ? He wanted to play Paul to her Virginia, to wander hand in hand with her upon the shores of Quiberon's ' sickle-shaped bay,' or some other not too remote strand unfrequented by the ubiquitous tripper.

And afterwards ?

She put the question brutally with derisive laughter, and he could never face it—like a paladin. Instead, he evaded it, slinking past the inevitable, actually blushing when she brazenly presented the possibility of children.

But the main issue remained the stage. He heard of the visit to FitzRoy, but not of the walk from St. Martin's Lane to Piccadilly Circus ; and he had to smile at Esther's description of Miranda Jagg, turning up his nose at the pink dressing-gown and carpet slippers.

' If you had heard her with the star class—— '

' I don't want to hear her. That you should mix with such people makes me miserable. And I'm astounded that you should have gone alone to see FitzRoy. I told you that would be the last straw.'

' You did. Why are you here to-day ? A man of your inches should never threaten what he does not intend to perform.'

' I intended to cut loose, but you're a witch. If I let you try this ridiculous experiment will you marry me in three months ? '

She hesitated.

' Perhaps,' she said gently, ' but not till I've justified existence by earning my own bread and butter. Meantime, you are free and I am free.'

' I don't want to be free.'

' I know you, Harry, and I know myself. Perhaps I know you better than I know myself, because I have never lived with antimacassars and Berlin wool-work. They are conspicuous in my new lodging, and they are sure to change my point of view.'

' And heaps of people want you.'

' For week-end visits.'

He went away grumbling, although they kissed at parting. When he had gone Esther sat frowning and thinking for nearly an hour. Why had this gallant lover shrunk in Cupid's washing ? Perhaps offence lay in the humiliating inference that he was

enamoured desperately of her body, while he expressed distrust if not contempt of her intelligence. Instinct told her that Harry Rye would be hard to live with if he discovered that his wife was cleverer than himself.

The conviction stole upon her that she, even as he, had fallen in love with the envelope without waiting to study the document within. His good looks, his pleasant voice, his easy manner, had captivated her. He had that 'little way' with women which counts for so much. Once she had asked her father what he thought of the young fellow. Mr. Yorke had replied drily that he was 'decorative.'

Thinking of Harry, another face formed itself in her mind—the face of the doctor who had accosted her in Piccadilly Circus. The incident refused to be banished from memory. She had been weak, abominably weak, at a moment when she should have been strong. And her weakness, not her beauty, such as it was, had appealed to a kindly man. Why had she felt faint? Did the sense of physical incapacity to rise to an emergency foreshadow horrors in the future? Her father, man of iron as she had deemed him to be, had failed in a supreme moment, because he was tired. And that word solved her riddle. Alone in the tremendous crowd, subject to its irresistible force, she had realised her own helplessness. Something more than words had passed between her and the waif of the pavement. If they never met again, they were linked together, because in this unhappy creature Esther recognised a debased resemblance to herself. She knew that the girl had had sunny hours; she knew that the storm must have come suddenly, drenching her to the skin before she was aware of it, deafening her with its thunders, blinding her with its lightning. At the moment when she was engulfed by the crowd she had flung Esther a pathetic smile, half grateful, half derisive. The smile had seemed to say 'I know what you are because I remember what I was. I might be you; you might be me.'

And the truth made Esther sick and dizzy.

CHAPTER IV.

IN BLOOMSBURY.

BLOOMSBURY received her and her pretty things in the middle of August. Sabrina had discovered, not without difficulty, two nice

rooms in a dingy street within a stone's throw of Mecklenburgh Square. One of the rooms was glorified by a genuine Adam's chimney-piece upon which stood a frightful ormolu clock under a glass shade and two Bohemian glass vases rising out of mats of purple and green Berlin wool-work. Antimacassars abounded.

The installation had its humours.

Sabrina, from the first, opposed the taking of two rooms. And she tried, quite in vain, to persuade Esther to sell her Sheraton bookcase and other 'meubles' of not inconsiderable value.

'I must keep something to remind me of the fat years.'

'That is where you are so unwise. You ought to sell everything, I mean *everything*, invest the whole of it, and live on the income.'

'Live on a pound a week?'

'Certainly.'

'I couldn't.'

'Millions have to do it.'

Esther made a grimace, and Sabrina laughed, shrugging her shoulders. Already she divined obstinacy in this new friend and the determination to go free. Mrs. Willet, the landlady, removed the antimacassars and wool-work and most of her furniture, not, however, without protest and affirmation of respectability. Miss Yorke, so she told her husband, was quite the lady; but she looked at Sabrina with wide-eyed interrogation. A play-actress! That's what they called 'emself! Sabrina, it is true, had introduced Esther, who seemed to have come to stay; but Sabrina also had lowered the rent of the rooms to the irreducible minimum.

'I can't sleep when I think of that,' Mrs. Willet said to Willet.

Within a week two long boxes filled with scarlet geraniums adorned the second floor front. Number 11 became conspicuous in the dingy street.

'Who pays?' asked Willet.

'She does—cash on the nail for everything. You don't suppose——?'

'Never saw a Jill like this without her Jack,' said Willet.

'I'll have no Jacks, nor Toms either, taking away the character of my house,' declared Mrs. Willet.

'What you've got to do,' said the cautious Willet, 'is to see that the rent's paid. If Jack drops in to tea it is none o' your business.'

'I say nothing against tea, Willet. But if any young man drops in to supper, why, I'll drop on to him. I'm not a whited sepulchre like others in this street.'

Nobody came to tea or supper except Sabrina.

A month passed before Sabrina heard of Harry. Indeed, all mention of our paladin might have been suppressed had he not written a letter in which, for the fifth and last time, he proposed marriage.

'I have reason to believe' (he wrote) 'that my uncle might increase my allowance. The twins have not had even measles, and they tell me babies die like flies in the dog-days. But I want your authority to write to Camber, and lay the facts before him. He's not a bad sort, and he must feel rather cheap when he thinks of me. He was fifty-eight when he married that designing woman!

'I've had no fun here because of your obstinacy. It drives me wild to think of you stewing in Bloomsbury when we might be together listening to a ripping band. I suppose you're living on buns and milk. Anyway, I want to tell Camber that we are engaged and going to get married at once. Then he can do the square thing if he means to behave decently. It might burke the affair to make our marriage provisional on his doubling my allowance, because it wouldn't surprise me a little bit if the Mater had got at him. They met at Cowes, where people have absolutely nothing to do except to prattle about other people's business.

'And now, at the risk of your calling me a beast, I'm going to say frankly that if you say "No," I shall take it that things are at an end between us. I want you as you are, dearest, not as you will be three years hence if you *do* succeed, which you admit is doubtful. Why rub off the bloom scrimmaging about with these confounded mummers?'

A postscript followed:—

'I've lost a stone over this job.'

The postscript nearly melted Esther. Her Harry thin and pale, wandering alone upon the sands of Ostend, brought tears to the heart if not to the eyes. And his letter came pat to a moment when the excitement of a great change had died a natural death. For several days Miranda had been sharper in word and manner. Slowly but unmistakably our heroine was beginning to grasp the fundamental difference between the gifted amateur and the professional, and to see clearly the nature of the road which she had elected to travel: a road lined with despairing ranks of unemployed. Sabrina, with her undoubted talent, remained without an autumn

engagement. She wrote innumerable letters to dramatists and actor-managers, she advertised in 'The Era,' she wore out shoe-leather flitting from agency to agency, but she was not wanted.

By this time Esther had learned to admire in Sabrina qualities lacking in herself. Sabrina's commonsense cooled not unpleasantly perfervid sensibilities. Esther herself, not infelicitously, called this 'taking a dip in the Severn.' But she had never plunged to the depths. Each girl had little more than a surface knowledge of the other.

'Miranda has been awfully cross lately. What am I to infer from that?'

'She will drink stout when the thermometer is seventy in the shade.'

'Sabrina—she thinks me a duffer.'

'So you are.'

'A *hopeless* duffer.'

'Are you fishing? You've not done badly.'

'I read "chuck it!" in her funny little beady eyes.'

'Well, if anything else turned up, I'd say "chuck it" too.'

'Something has turned up. A man wants to marry me. I've said "no" four times.'

Esther poured out the story curled up at ease on her divan amongst the big soft cushions. Sabrina sat bolt upright in a straight-backed chair.

'Why have you told me this?'

'I want your advice.'

'I don't believe it. You want my experience. I don't see why I should give it to you. If I had asked for your confidence—I have been afraid of this. Perhaps we're going too fast. I like you. I like you better every time we meet, but can I trust you? Why do you trust me?'

She shot the question at Esther.

'How funny you are!'

'Funny?' Sabrina scowled. 'What an idiotic expression! You raise a tremendous issue. I say tremendous, because it is so to me. It may not be so to you. Why should you trust me? We have known each other a few weeks.'

'I wanted to tell you the first day we met.'

'Thank the Lord you didn't! I dislike women who gush without encouragement. And yet I like you. I believe I could love you. And, for my life, I can't analyse the why and wherefore.'

'Why should you? It's instinct.'

'Perhaps. But I'm afraid of my instinct.'

'I have asked no confidence from you.'

'Pouf-f-f! A cutlet for a cutlet is imperative. You have, in a sense, forced my hand, and yet I'm not indignant. That's what surprises me.'

Esther laughed, rolled off her cushions, stood up, and then, bending suddenly, kissed Sabrina affectionately.

'Whether you like me or not, I love you.'

Sabrina did not return the salute, but she grumbled out: 'I suppose that settles it. Now, don't scream, and don't say anything ridiculous; I'm a married woman.'

'Sabrina!'

'Let us be perfectly calm. I'm a married woman, and I don't live with my husband, who is a respectable person. He allows me one hundred and fifty a year.'

'Gracious!'

'I would sooner you took this lying down. Please climb back on to your cushions. I married to escape from the slavery of fifteen shillings a week. I didn't love my husband, and he knew it. Fortunately he is a golfer. I can't account for it, but to some men that game offers perfectly astounding compensations. The week before a competition I told my husband that we had been idiots to marry. He was furious. He said that I'd wrecked his chance. My dear, I can only conclude that it gave him the fillip he needed. He played the game of his life, and his handicap was lowered to five. It is now, I believe, three, and by giving his mashie undivided attention he may get down to scratch. He won three events, and he was so delighted that he consented to our separation. He is perfectly happy—and so am I.'

'Did he l-love you?'

'He thought he did.'

Harry's letter was produced and a photograph—the same which stood upon Lady Matilda's baby-grand piano, and which provoked maternal superlatives. Sabrina looked at it critically, with a vertical line between her delicate brows, and her lower lip pressing full upon the arch of the upper.

'He is very handsome.'

'Yes.'

'I suppose that appealed enormously to you. It would to me. My poor Tom was not beautiful.' She went on, staring at the

photograph as if striving to pierce beneath the crust, while a few phrases dropped upon the silence.

'You promised his mother, but promises at the point of the pistol are not binding. What some excellent persons call honour has never tyrannised over me. At least not since I left Tom. And Mr. Rye has seven hundred a year, and——'

'His debts.'

'I was going to say the hope, the probability, of an increased allowance from Lord Camber, who I've been told is rich beyond the dreams of avarice; but the avarice may be there all the same. It wouldn't be prudent to assume the increase of allowance.'

'I don't.'

'Quite right! Then the twins may perish. Your Harry alluded to dog-days.'

'It was horrid of him.'

'It proves that he has a sanguine temperament. What he says of scrimmaging about with mummers is so true. The bloom will fade from his dearest in Bloomsbury.'

'You are laughing at him and me?'

'God forbid!'

'You don't like him?'

'Wrong again. I like him because he is so—guileless, and, unconsciously, such a humorist. If you marry him he will amuse you.'

'You say that gravely, as if it were really an inducement.'

'If you had known my poor Tom! Well, I detest giving an opinion upon anything as vital as this, but you expect it. Mr. Rye is not clever. Therefore you may do something with him if you exercise extraordinary tact. He must be kept up to the mark. He mustn't play the hero intermittently. Why do you wriggle?'

'I can't help it; you present him in motley.'

'The West End tailors will tell you it's the common wear, but don't let him find it out. Of course you'll marry him.'

'I shall not marry him,' said Esther slowly.

'You won't be able to stand this life. Don't mistake me! You may learn to live on lentils and like them, but disappointment will crush you.'

The word came out harshly; the lines in the speaker's face deepened.

'I can't marry him.'

'You mean you don't love him.'

'I mean—oh! it's hard to explain. I did love him. And there are moments now—— But I seem to see him with different eyes. I have become critical.'

'Exit Cupid, weeping.'

'Yes. And yet ——' She sighed, faintly blushing, remembering how she had felt when she lay in his arms.

'Are there two Esther Yorkes?'

'Half a dozen!'

'Then, as the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England, I forbid the banns. Henry Rye must not be encouraged to commit polygamy.'

'If you would be really serious.'

'But I am serious, more serious than you are or can be.' Her charming voice, with its many inflections, deepened and became impressive. 'And, as you wish it, I shall speak plainly, and I daresay you will be furious. This young man has been making love to you for years. You know it, he knows it, and other men know it. I'll bet a new hat you have had no proposals.'

'Not one.'

'He stuck a sign upon you. "Private property. Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law!"'

'I had never thought of it in that way.'

'He played cricket for the Gentlemen of England. What a fine phrase—the Gentlemen of England! But he didn't play cricket with you. Don't look indignant! He wanted to be free to amuse himself; when the time came he knew you would be there, a nice dimpled little dear, ready to fall into his arms when he opened them.'

'But he did ask me. Is he selfish now?'

'Yes,' said Sabrina deliberately. 'He is thinking of the bloom on the peach.'

'Why shouldn't he?'

Sabrina shrugged her shoulders. Esther continued vehemently:

'If he really wants me——'

'Oh! He wants you. He is the hart royal, heated in the chase, and you—the cooling stream.'

'I don't feel particularly cool.'

'When he has slaked his thirst, what then? Can you face that question fearlessly? Most girls have not the pluck, nor the

brains, nor the experience. I am talking plainly, Esther. If some friend had talked as plainly to me, Tom might not have begun to play golf on his honeymoon. My dear, if you expect to find in a husband the great things: fidelity, sympathy, and unselfishness, don't marry this man!

'I have said that I shall not marry him.'

'True, but you are one of those delightful creatures who are governed by impulse instead of reason. Now let me show the other side. Your Harry has seven hundred a year, and more to come. With his upbringing and yours, seven hundred a year means pinching, but it does not mean—starvation.'

The grim word fell like a blow.

'Starvation?'

'I have starved. I have felt so hungry that I could have stolen a crust from a dog or a child. I have been tempted, atrociously tempted, to sell the only thing that was left me for a mess of pottage.' She laughed drearily. 'If Esau suffered half the pangs that have torn me I do not blame him. Well, I worried through because I am stronger than most. Will you worry through?'

Esther's tears were falling on the silken cushions.

'I do not know,' she faltered. Sabrina continued in a softer tone:

'Marry this man with your eyes open, and you will be fairly comfortable, fairly secure. Because he trifled with you when you were rich, you have the right to marry him now that you are poor. I am clear on that point.'

'I shall not marry him.'

'Amen. I dare not say Hallelujah!'

Next day Esther wrote to Harry:

I cannot marry you. Perhaps the bloom has been rubbed off already. Life seems very difficult. And because the present is dull and drab one thinks more and more of the future. With you, or without you, I am terrified of the future. Good-bye.

Harry received this letter as he was sipping his morning coffee upon the terrace of a splendid hotel overlooking the sea. He told himself that he was the most miserable man in Ostend and the most unlucky. Only the night before, at the Cercle Privé, he had lost a (for him) not inconsiderable sum at baccarat, and, accordingly, had fortified himself with the reflection that his love affairs must

be mending. Had a man ever been known to be unlucky in love and cards simultaneously?

But he had done the real right thing.

For the moment he slips from our sight. It will never be known what Lady Matilda said to Lord Camber at Cowes, but Harry had the good fortune to secure a billet at The Hague, and together with this a pleasant letter from his uncle, saying that his allowance would be increased, and that in the event of his marrying a suitable young lady proper settlements might be made. The word 'suitable' may be explained by a letter from Lady Matilda, which we present unmutilated:—

MY DEAREST BOY,—Captain Saladin, whom I met at Cowes—he is one of the oldest members of the Squadron, and very kind, although they do call him the Old Curiosity Shop—seems to have known Douglas Yorke very intimately five-and-twenty years ago. Captain Saladin tells me, in the strictest confidence, that there was a certain scandal about Mrs. Yorke. Nobody knew anything about her. Of course her death soon after poor dear Esther's birth silenced all tongues. But Captain Saladin is quite sure that Douglas Yorke was *not* legally married to her. This has been a terrible shock, for you know how very dear Esther was—and *is*—to me. It is curious that in the books of reference which I have dipped into there is no mention of any marriage. In these cases one *must* infer the worst.

Have you seen my picture in the current number of 'Butterflies'? *I am on the front page.* The likeness is excellent, but underneath is written: *One of our Titled Breeders of Poultry.* The editor, silly fellow! confounded me with that fright Matilda Wyandotte whose photograph appears in the middle of the paper with *my* name under it. This has annoyed me very much, for the Grand Duke Ivan, who ought to know better, will sing before me a vulgar song about cocks crowing and everybody knowing that there'll be eggs for breakfast in the morning!!! And last night, dining on the royal yacht, I found an egg in my napkin. The Prince was unkind enough to roar with laughter.

Always your loving

MOTHER.

P.S.—I do see the finger of Providence in all this.

M.R.

P.P.S.—Your uncle has been *most* civil. It is so odd to reflect that he might have married little me if your father hadn't turned up. *Ça donne furieusement à penser!*

P.P.P.S.—Of course poor dear Esther knows nothing of this sad story, and must never know. Many kisses.

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CHAPTER V.

CONTAINS A COMMUNICATION.

MIRANDA prided herself on telling the truth. Managers, appreciating this rare virtue, often came to her in hours of need and engaged pupils with no recommendation other than Miss Jagg's assurance that they were not 'sticks.' Greater praise she bestowed on few. The 'sticks,' moreover, never lingered long with her, unless they had more money than pride. After a couple of months she would say, with a smile that took some of the sting out of her words: 'My dear, you are no good; you can't act for nuts, and I can't make you act. Chuck it! If you won't chuck it, I must double my terms. There you are!'

Sometimes the sacred fire burned so strongly that they stayed on at double fees!

Before September was over Miranda asked Esther to share a steak and a quart of stout. If you lunched with Miss Jagg you ate and drank what she ate and drank—or went without. After the cheese Miranda always made the coffee; and after the coffee she would speak with even greater frankness and volubility than usual.

'I wish I could turn you into a great actress,' she told Esther, as she lit a cigarette, 'but I can't. You are no better and no worse than nine-tenths of the girls who come to me. With luck you may get an engagement as understudy, and later, when your looks go, you may be cast for third-rate parts. Nothing more can be expected; and so I say chuck it! Try something else. Don't waste time and money knocking at doors which, believe me, won't open wide for you.'

'Thanks,' said Esther.

'Thank *you* for not howling. Tears make me furious; and look here, have no regrets. It's a beast of a profession. I love it—yes, because I was born and bred in it; but it tears the heart out of one. Look at Sabrina Lovell! With half a chance she'd earn her forty guineas a week, but chance won't come her way.'

'What can I do?'

'My dear, go back to your friends, wear some smart black and white frocks, marry a nice kind man.'

'Mention something else.'

'You might start a hat shop, or a dressmaking establishment.'

'Establishment!'

'Two girls who came to me, both sticks, are doing well with a bookstall. They started in one tiny room on next to nothing. Another woman, who played leading parts in the provinces, now makes sandwiches and cakes somewhere in Battersea. There are ways for girls without means, but they are hard to find.'

'I hate saying good-bye,' said Esther.

'Why good-bye? You will come and see me. We shall remain friends. If you decide to trim hats I shall send some heads to you. Talk it over with Sabrina Lovell.'

To Esther's surprise Sabrina thought well of the hat shop.

'It's largely a matter of *clientèle*,' she observed. 'You must know heaps of people; and you've excellent taste. You would buy some really good models in Paris and get the shapes copied over here. You would have to pay a top wage to a first-class trimmer.'

'I must think it over.'

'If I were to go in with you——?'

'Sabrina!'

'I'm sick of doing nothing. You've five hundred pounds, and I've one hundred and fifty pounds a year for ever and ever. Together we can't starve.'

'You are always using that word "starve."'

'I'm branded with it.'

'I should be afraid of nothing with you as a partner.'

'We'll think this over.'

'Books would be more interesting.'

'I'm sure there's no money in bookselling, but I'll find out.'

Next day Sabrina consulted a friend who was at once author, publisher, and bookseller. His report was not encouraging.

'I don't know,' said he, 'which is the greater fool, the man who writes books or the man who sells books.'

'People can do so easily without books, but they must wear hats,' said Sabrina.

That night they spent two hours staring at a map of London, and considering the respective claims of different localities. For a week they walked about Mayfair, peering into hat-shop windows.

'The profits must be enormous,' said Esther.

'Um,' replied Sabrina.

They began to scan the advertisement columns; finally they inserted one of their joint composition:

'Wanted: two rooms for the purpose of establishing a small hat shop in a fashionable part of town. Rent must be moderate.'

They were inundated with letters.

Finally Chapel Street, S.W. was selected. Sabrina insisted upon an agreement; and Miranda said that everything between partners should be set forth in black and white. The day before the agreement was signed Miranda spoke a last word to Esther.

'Sabrina Lovell has shown me the agreement.'

'It's more in my favour than hers. Don't you think so?'

'Yes—if you can trust her.'

'Trust—Sabrina?'

'My dear, you must get out of the trick of raising your pretty eyebrows unnecessarily high. Keep your forehead smooth as long as you can. Sabrina Lovell is a good sort—that's why I tried to bring you together—but you are risking your little capital; she has no capital.'

'She shares her income with me.'

'True. But if you lost your capital she might decline to go on sharing the income.'

'You don't know Sabrina.'

'I admit it cheerfully. No woman does really know another woman.'

'She would share her last crust with a friend.'

'You have shown the agreement to your solicitor?'

'Of course. I am twenty-one next month, and the money is not mine till then. He' (the man of law was indicated) 'is a regular old woman.'

'He might be something worse. I am an irregular old woman.'

'You will always be young, Miranda.'

'I am old as the hills when it comes to business; old when I pinch and screw to save a few pounds; only young,' she smiled and sighed, 'when I'm spending money, my dear.'

'And time,' added Esther, taking her hand.

'You ought to say those pleasant things to men. I can't imagine why the men aren't buzzing round you. Honeypot you are. Marriage would suit you a heap better than selling hats. Where on earth is Jack?'

Esther kissed her and whispered:

'Once there was a Harry. I can't talk about him, and you

mustn't ask questions. By the way, speaking of my solicitor, Mr. Bostock, I am to receive what he calls a communication on my twenty-first birthday.'

'Oh! Mystery?'

'Yes; I'm sure from his face and manner that it's something unpleasant. But I'm hardened now.'

'Pooh! Soft as cream cheese still.'

'I'm not.'

'You are. Well, I believe you can trust Sabrina; but suppose anything happened to her, what then?'

'She has splendid health.'

'So have I, but I shall turn up my toes one day—perhaps to-morrow. I'm getting so fat that I shall be run over by a motor.'

'One must take some chances.'

'Yes; that's true. I shall buy a hat from you; my pupils must buy hats; my friends must buy hats.'

The repapering of the rooms in Chapel Street occupied both girls for a few days, and during an exciting fortnight the name of the firm was chosen—*Sabrina et Cie*. Circular letters were printed, and later a journey to Paris undertaken. High hope coloured two pair of cheeks; but the word 'fun,' too often in Esther's mouth, provoked a rebuke.

'The real fun will begin when we touch our profits. I mean to touch them, if there are any. I shall put fifty sovereigns into a basin and wash my hands in them.'

'You have no regrets, Sabrina, about the stage?'

'I feel towards the stage as you feel towards Harry Rye. If I were offered a big engagement I should refuse it.'

'Rubbish! I could attend to the shop.'

'And who, pray, would attend to you?'

About this time an incident occurred, trifling in itself, but one to be recorded. Esther and Sabrina were wandering through the New Gallery, when Esther exclaimed, as heedless of grammar as the good folk in 'The Jackdaw of Rheims':

'That's him!'

She pointed excitedly at a portrait hanging upon the line: a remarkable piece of work by an artist just beginning to challenge attention. Other portraits compared with this seemed commonplace, partly because the face indicated a masterful personality and partly because the treatment suggested a story. The accessories in the picture had been presented with a few strong touches,

everything being subordinate to the head and hands, and yet these accessories—of no particular interest to the beholder—denoted an overmastering passion in the model. A man was standing in a laboratory, holding up a test-tube upon which his eyes were fixed in a glance so penetrating and intense that curiosity as to what the test-tube might contain became mordant. One saw a colourless fluid. In the dim background a plain deal table was covered by shadowy glass retorts and other paraphernalia.

'Who is he?' said Sabrina.

'The doctor I met in Piccadilly Circus.'

She had told the story to Sabrina.

Esther looked at the catalogue. Number 271 bore the name Harvey Napier, and after it, F.R.C.S.

'Have you ever heard of Harvey Napier?' Esther asked after a pause.

'No,' said Sabrina, with her eyes on the portrait, 'but we shall hear of him. He's small and ugly, but what a forehead! What eyes!'

'And, evidently, he cares to look at nothing except what is in that tube.'

'That is why we shall hear of him some day.'

'He has had his bad times, too,' murmured Esther.

'You are sure it's the same man?'

'Absolutely.'

Sabrina stepped back, holding up her hands to isolate the face.

'I see triumph, eh? Those few drops represent, perhaps, months of work. How cleverly the means are subordinated: mere shadows. But the end, the result, is there. He holds it in his hands as if it were the Grail. It may be the Grail to him, to obtain which he has had to sacrifice what other men hold dear.'

'Sabrina, you make me see that. How wonderful you are!'

'The triumph is tempered by some emotion I can't quite interpret. Do you think he is counting the cost?' Esther nodded as Sabrina continued:

'I see books, innumerable books, ghosts of books! He has read them all. The painter is a wizard. This is a great moment, but he is not quite satisfied. He knows that he has paid too much. Perhaps the janitor can give us information.'

But the janitor, good, easy fellow, knew nothing except that the portrait aroused interest.

'It's some doctor. There's poison in that tube.'

'How do you know?'

'It's poison,' the man repeated obstinately. 'A swell said so; I heard him.'

The girls went back to the picture. Sabrina frowned at the test-tube.

'If it's poison he may be wondering whether he has discovered good or evil.'

'We must find out more about him.'

A doctor supplied details. Napier was a rising man, a specialist in diseases of women and children, and the author of a text-book on toxicology; he was a bachelor, a man of few friends, something of a recluse, with a bedside manner not to be described as engaging. 'He tells 'em what he really thinks,' concluded their informant, 'and they don't like it.'

The portrait impressed itself upon Esther's mind, but other things covered it up, the obscuring films of new experiences. Nevertheless, she had the instinct that Napier and she would meet again and the vague hope that the meeting might take place soon. Sabrina expressed the opinion that women were beneath his horizon. 'He has never had time to fall in love,' she asserted.

In October Esther came of age. Sabrina and she dined together at an inexpensive restaurant and went to the play, occupying two stalls, free seats of course, in a crowded house. But Sabrina, after a leisurely survey, whispered the word 'Paper!'

'How do you know?'

'Unmistakable. Look at the frocks! Look at the men! And the expressions! They all come conscious that the piece is doomed. Funereal—isn't it? And they won't applaud if they can possibly help it; and they'll crab the play, good or bad.'

The play happened, however, to be good and admirably cast; but coming out of the theatre two stout dowagers on their way to supper at the Savoy muttered that the entertainment was much too long. These ladies had paid for their stalls; the free list, returning to the suburbs with nothing more exciting ahead than sandwiches and lager, pronounced the play 'too sad.' Men slaving from nine to six in the City, women with more children than servants, and pallid from the strenuous endeavour to make weekly cash receipts balance weekly bills, wanted to be amused by farce or thrilled by melodrama.

'They think sometimes,' said Sabrina, 'but they do their thinking outside the theatre. This play is fine, but it won't last

three weeks, and the cast has been rehearsing for nearly six without pay. Some of 'em will earn less than a fiver for two months' work. We must do better than that with our hats.'

'I shall have my five hundred pounds to-morrow.'

'And the communication?'

'And the communication.'

Esther went alone to the offices of Barnwell & Bostock, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Old Mr. Bostock was associated in her mind with horrors, for he had broken to her, as considerably as possible, the news of her father's defalcations. The fact that he was so terribly shocked had made the recital more poignant, for Barnwell & Bostock had acted as Mr. Yorke's private solicitors and knew nothing, except by hearsay, of the affairs of the bank.

Esther was ushered into a private room which exuded respectability from every pore. It was stuffy and small; but certain names printed in white letters upon black tin boxes were as refreshing as ozone to those who believe that our landed gentry are the backbone of the kingdom.

'Sit down, my dear young lady. Can I offer you a glass of barley water?'

'No, thank you,' said Esther nervously.

The old man fumbled with some papers. His fingers shook as he took from a drawer a memorandum-book and opened it.

'Did your father ever speak to you of your mother?'

'Never.'

'She was a charming woman.'

'You knew her, Mr. Bostock?'

'Quite well.'

He took off his spectacles and polished the lenses, looking from them to his client with a distress which appealed to Esther.

'Mr. Bostock,' she said, 'I am sure that what you have to tell me pains you'—he nodded—'but I can't remember my mother, and I am quite prepared for something disagreeable. After what has passed nothing can hurt me very much.'

'Your father ran away with your mother.'

'Ran away?'

She tried to visualise this elopement, and failed. Her father remained the automaton, the machine.

'Yes.'

'It sounds incredible.'

'She was the wife of another man'

'Oh!'

'Who had treated her abominably.'

'Oh, oh!'

'She behaved like an angel. The man was a client of mine and not responsible. He became insane. At the risk of her life she took care of him till others—I amongst the number—interfered. He was placed in a private asylum, and he is there still.'

A silence followed, broken only by the rustling of the papers moved by the lawyer's thin, wrinkled hand. Presently he said slowly: 'The marriage laws of this country may be a blessing to many, but they can be a terrible curse to the few. The wife of an incurable madman can obtain no divorce.'

'My mother never married my father.'

'She resisted him as long as she could. He was a masterful man, and he adored her. When she died in a sort of sense he died, too. I have known three such cases, only three. Your father was intended to be the exact opposite of what he became afterwards. Your mother and he had two years of happiness abroad. Here is a letter from her to me.'

He held out an envelope.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—After all you have done and tried to do for me, I must write to tell you how completely happy I am. As you know I had denied the possibility of happiness; and always I had laughed at Douglas when he told me, over and over again, that he held it in trust for me. My only regret is that I did not go to him sooner. I don't think we shall ever return to England, Douglas is satisfied with Italy, and so am I. I want my baby to be born in this land of sun so that it may be warmed through and through. I was never warm till I lived here. Come and see us when you have ten days to spare. . . .

'There is one more,' said the lawyer. Then he added with a sigh: 'I did visit them, shortly before you were born. I have never seen two persons so entirely happy, and so absolutely interdependent upon each other.'

Esther read the second letter:

MY DEAR FRIEND,—The baby has my eyes and skin. Between ourselves Douglas is jealous of it. He thinks it stands between him and me. His devotion is something extraordinary. Now that my health is not what it was I seem to realise more fully the strength of his feeling for me. We are going to the mountains next week, and soon I shall be myself again. This is a scrappy letter, but really I'm still ridiculously weak, as you will divine from my handwriting.

Esther laid the letter upon her lap.

'She went to the mountains,' said Mr. Bostock, 'but she didn't recover her strength. She died.'

'And then——?'

'Your father came home with you. I hardly recognised him. He went back to business, founded the bank, devoted himself to the accumulation of money. He became very rich. I saw little of him. I made his will. At that time I promised to tell you what I have told you in the event of his decease. I think that's all. If you would like to keep those letters——'

'Thank you very much.'

'And now about this enterprise of yours?'

They talked hat-shop for half an hour. At the end the lawyer said in his deliberate tone: 'You will have your way, and perhaps you are right. Still, if the money were invested——'

Esther repeated her phrase: 'One must take certain chances.'

'Yes; and the world is divided into the lucky and the unlucky.'

'My mother was unlucky, Mr. Bostock?'

'She had two wonderful years.'

Esther went her way. Sabrina was waiting for her at her lodging, but she felt dazed, unable to think or to speak with lucidity. Alone, in the Temple Gardens, she tried to marshal her whirling thoughts.

Ever since her father's death an increasing resentment against poverty and discomfort and the sordid side of life had thrown into high relief her desire for happiness and tranquillity, and her terror lest these should be denied to her. And, day by day, she had realised that misery and suffering are imposed upon the many. Not a dozen feet away was a magnificent perambulator in which a baby lay asleep, a dimpled darling, upon whose pink, plump prettiness money and care and love had been lavished. Staring at the baby stood a little girl, ragged, indescribably dirty, with that hopeless, helpless expression of misery upon her pinched face, so indescribably terrible and pathetic.

Of what was the child thinking? Did envy tear her small heart?

Suddenly perceiving Esther's eyes upon her, she said sharply 'Ain't it pretty?'

A well-nourished nurse bade the waif begone in a voice not to be disregarded. Esther beckoned, and the girl limped up to her, sucking a black thumb. A few questions elicited as many facts. The child lived in a kennel with drunken parents. She was half-starved. To give to her food, to learn her address in the hope

of finding sanctuary for her in some hospital where hip-disease would justify admission, engrossed Esther for half an hour, and lightened her own burdens. Then her thoughts returned, like boomerangs, to the point of departure: the bar sinister across her birth. And not till then did she consider its relation to her love affair with Rye, which shows that her love or fancy for our paladin had diminished. When she did think of him she smiled faintly and murmured to herself: 'What an escape for Harry!'

(To be continued)

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SIXTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS.

SOME PASSAGES BY THE WAY.

BY HENRY W. LUCY.

XXIX.

'THE OBSERVER' AND 'THE STRAND MAGAZINE'

LOOKING back on the period of my slavery on 'Mayfair' I have vivid recollection of walking along the Strand to catch a humble 'bus at Charing Cross and seeing the Saturday night crowds hanging round the theatre doors in anticipation of a pleasant evening. There was some feeling of envy at the varied circumstance between theatre-goers and myself. But I do not remember ever asking myself whether life was worth living in the groove I had voluntarily chosen. There it was. I had undertaken a task and I just went on with it, plodding away through two long years, working like a galley slave, not earning money, steadily, uninterruptedly losing it. Dear Joe Cowen never by sign or word made my lot harder by complaint. When fresh cheques were wanted to pay the printer or the literary staff his share was promptly forthcoming.

On the whole I do not regret that I went through this particular mill. It was excellent discipline, though I admit, if the boon were offered me again, I should be so unselfish as to desire that another should profit by the opportunity.

'Mayfair' certainly advanced my professional position. The public would not have it, even though I allured them by the then novel attraction of pen-and-ink sketches illustrating the text. But it was sought at the clubs and was much in favour in the editorial rooms in the country.

In 1880 Edward Dicey, then editor of the 'Sunday Observer,' came to me with the proposal to write a Parliamentary article for his paper. This meant sacrifice of Saturday mornings, only two years earlier rescued from the cruel clutch of 'Mayfair.' I bargained for full freedom of judgment and perfect liberty of speech,

conditions granted and honourably observed. For the space of twenty-eight years, save the interlude of my editorship of the 'Daily News,' the 'Cross Bench' article has been a familiar feature in the 'Observer,' and has never been touched by the editorial pen. It was necessarily discontinued during my editorship of the 'Daily News.' As in the case of my London Daily Letter, the writer was warmly welcomed back to his old quarters when the fetters of Bouverie Street were loosed.

One article in the long series described a memorable scene in the House of Commons. On April 8, 1892, Mr. Gladstone, following Mr. Chamberlain in debate, without note of preparation, fell upon his former colleague and belaboured him with effect the greater since the reprisal was free from the slightest display of brutal force. It was all rapier work. Description of the scene brought me one of the characteristic post-cards begun at the very top, not necessarily with intent of filling up the space, but with careful provision of room if necessary. It is dated 1 Carlton Gardens, April 12, 1892, and runs thus: 'One word of thanks, however hasty, for the brilliant article. It has but one fault, that of excess with reference to the merits of the principal subject of it.—W. E. GLADSTONE.'

In the Session of 1892 I was a guest at one of the many Parliamentary dinner parties at which Seale Hayne hospitably provided opportunity for seeing his wonderful collection of Old Masters and tasting his excellent port. On the formation of his fourth Administration Mr. Gladstone, mindful of certain hospitalities provided by Seale Hayne in his Devonshire quarters, made him Paymaster-General, a Ministerial office distinguished by the fact that whilst it implies lavish distribution of money the incumbent himself receives no salary. Seale Hayne chiefly, if not exclusively, distinguished himself in office by a little incident happening outside Downing Street. During his brief term of Premiership Lord Rosebery revived the Greenwich dinner, intermitted under the austere rule of Mr. Gladstone. It was held at the close of the Session and was marked by the ebullition of spirits that accompanies the 'break up' of other schools. On the withdrawal of the cloth Seale Hayne, known to possess a fine baritone voice, was invited to contribute a song to the harmony of the evening. Blushing he consented and trolled forth 'Down among the dead men.'

The appropriateness of the ditty, questioned at first, on reflection became recognised. The Ministry, though not actually deceased,

was hopelessly moribund. Before the following Session (1895) had sped half its way the Paymaster-General and his colleagues were—as far as office was concerned—like the host of Sennacherib encamped before Jerusalem, 'all dead corpses.'

At Seale Hayne's table on this particular night I chanced to sit by Mr. George Newnes, his baronetcy still afar off. He was then known chiefly as the proprietor of a weekly paper called 'Tit Bits,' which, hitting the public fancy, proved an immediate success. He was full of a project for the starting of a new monthly magazine, to cost sixpence and be worth at least a shilling. He intimated a desire that when the new venture was started I should join the staff, contributing through the Session a Parliamentary article. I did not think anything more of the matter, not being, to tell the truth, attracted to the opening offered by a new enterprise when my hands were full of work for established papers, daily, weekly, and monthly. When the first issue of the 'Strand Magazine' appeared and met with instant welcome from an appreciative public Newnes approached me with definite invitation to join the staff. In addition to the prejudice hinted at there was peculiar difficulty in fashioning the work. A daily, even weekly, paper is at sufficiently close range to keep touch with the current sittings of Parliament. Articles for the new magazine must be in the printer's hands at least four weeks before publication. (As the sale of the magazine went up by leaps and bounds it became necessary for my copy to be ready two months in advance.)

This condition of affairs made the project seem impracticable. Newnes, however, was not the man to have his plans frustrated by a negative. As he continued to press the proposal I invited him to lunch quietly with me at Ashley Gardens and talk the matter over. I had resolved to get out of the difficulty by demanding for the article what I thought would be a prohibitive price. I was so won over by Newnes's cheery confidence that we parted with the understanding that he was to make a definite offer for the series. When it reached me I found the proffered fee something in excess of what I had conceived to be a prohibitive price.

'From behind the Speaker's Chair' established a record unique in magazine serials. Session after Session it ran uninterruptedly through ten years. With the exception of the Diary of Toby, M.P., in 'Punch,' the articles brought me more friendly personal communications from unknown correspondents far and near than

anything I ever wrote. The circulation of the 'Strand,' enormous at home, extended to all parts of the world where the English race were settled. Going out to the Cape in 1894, the day of departure happened to coincide with the publication of the monthly number of the 'Strand.' On the bookstall at Waterloo Station a heap was piled. Every other person in the special train was possessed of a copy. Among the ship's cargo was a bale of the magazine, and on the day after arrival I saw on the railway bookstall at Capetown a pile nearly as high as the Waterloo Station consignment, diminishing with equal rapidity.

Shortly after arriving at Yokohama on a visit to Japan there entered my room a Japanese carrying under his arm a bulky volume. With many bows and much indrawing of the breath, indicative of profound humility in the presence of immeasurable superiority, the morning caller informed me that he was the editor and proprietor of a local 'Punch.' Since copies were reproduced by a process akin to that of the ordinary office letter-book, the circulation must have been limited. The letterpress was adorned with abundant illustrations, some really comic. The volume he desired to lay at my feet, an offering from Japanese humorists to the unworthy representative of the Sage of Bouverie Street, London, was a bound copy of a year's weekly issue.

A parallel case affecting the 'Strand Magazine' happened during a later visit to the West Indies. Through the Post Office at Grenada I received from a correspondent in one of the smaller islands, the name of which I had never before heard, a sketch of the history of Grenada with a useful map. A letter accompanying the book explained that it was meant as a slight acknowledgment of the pleasure, spread over many years, derived from reading the Parliamentary sketches in the 'Strand Magazine.'

When at the end of 1902 the series was discontinued a selection was issued in book form under the title 'Peeps at Parliament.' Its reception was so encouraging that two years later it was followed by 'Later Peeps at Parliament.' Both volumes were enriched by reproduction of the multitudinous sketches by F.C.G., to whose appearance in the magazine the popularity of the series was largely due.

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XXX.

ON THE 'PUNCH' STAFF.

THE stages of my professional career may be traced as definitely and stated as tersely as was the identification of successive additions to the House that Jack built. 'Men and Manner in Parliament,' appearing in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' through the Session of 1874, attracting the attention of Edmund Yates, led to my engagement on 'The World.' The 'Under the Clock' articles in 'The World' suggested to Edward Dicey the idea of having something like them in 'The Observer.' On resigning the editorship in 1889, Dicey wrote: 'It will always be a source of pride to me to have published the "Cross Bench" articles in the "Observer."'

The 'Cross Bench' series, diligently read by Frank Burnand, induced him, as one of his first acts of authority when he became editor of 'Punch,' to invite me to take up the work commenced by Shirley Brooks, just relinquished by the hand of Tom Taylor. Here is Burnand's first letter:

London: September 11, 1880.

The 'Cross Benches' are *excellent*. I have watched them carefully. When you have five minutes to spare (not this week) I should like to have a chat if you will call in on me at 10 Bouverie Street any Thursday (from 11 to 4).

I was still writing the 'Cross Bench' article in 'The Observer,' and the difficulty of carrying on through successive weeks two commentaries on Parliamentary affairs that should be absolutely distinct in style and treatment seemed insuperable. That they were to run concurrently with 'Pictures in Parliament,' a prominent feature in the 'Daily News,' was not embarrassing. That was a chronicle of current events; the others were free commentaries upon them.

Undismayed I undertook the new task. It happened that on the threshold it came near to being abandoned. 'Essence of Parliament' was the title invented by Shirley Brooks when he commenced the new chapter in 'Punch.' It was adopted by Tom Taylor when he succeeded to the editorship. Burnand proposed that it should be preserved. I confess I did not admire it *per se*. Moreover, intending to do the work in quite a different style from that necessarily adopted by Tom Taylor, who knew no more about Parliament

than he gathered from the 'Times' report, I wanted to get in a note of individuality. The possibility of this I found in the dog Toby on the peerless title-page, Mr. Punch's faithful but voiceless companion. To get Toby elected to the House of Commons, thence describing scenes he had actually witnessed, commenting on speeches he had heard, was the idea I had in my mind. This I communicated to F. C. B., who replied :

Whitefriars, London : December 15, 1880.

DEAR SIR,—Have decided that no better title can be found than the old one which all are accustomed to in 'Punch'—'Essence of Parliament.' Now the question is Shall Toby go there as M.P., or as reporter to collect essence. Just turn this over. Sambourne has taken instructions for his picture of interviewing Toby as M.P.

However, let me know your views.

'Essence' is settled.

Qy., is Toby to go as M.P. (a pity to lose this)? But if so, in Preface we must say that he comes back every evening to 'report progress' to Mr. Punch, who returns him.

Burnand thus insisting on retaining the old title, I wrote :

158 Brixton Road, S.W., Wednesday night : December 15, 1880.

MY DEAR SIR,—I very much regret the determination announced in your letter of this morning with respect to retaining the old title of the Parliamentary sketch in 'Punch.' To tell the simple truth, it is one I could not write under. It would weigh me down like a tombstone.

In the first place, it is not mine, nor yours, nor even 'Punch's.' In the second place it was, I think, an unfortunately stiff and pedantic title—smelling of the druggist's shop—which only the ability of Mr. Shirley Brooks made passable. Finally, while it moderately well suited the style of the day when he started the series it would be hopelessly heavy and commonplace now. Then a Parliamentary summary, or 'Essence of Parliament,' was a new thing. Now every daily paper has one, and 'Punch' coming out once a week is from seven to ten days behind the fair. When you come to try and work the thing out, as is partly done in your note, see where we are landed. Fancy Toby going as a reporter to the House of Commons to collect 'Essence'!

I should be exceedingly sorry to abandon on the threshold an enterprise in which the more I have thought of it during the past two months the more clearly I see an opportunity of making a great hit; but I should be doing myself an injustice and saddling you with a failure if I were to attempt to work on the lines suggested in your note to hand to-night.

From F. C. Burnand, 10 Bouverie St., to H. W. Lucy.

December 16, 1880.

The difficulty will disappear: it may look a mountain but 'tis a molehill. The proprietors have such a very strong feeling on the subject of retaining the title 'Essence' merely as a heading that I am not prepared to fight for a small matter. And I do not think it will hamper you. At least it *mustn't*. Don't you bother your head about that; just settle it in your own way, and if B and A *insist* on the title being retained (they putting a certain proprietary value on it) I shall retain it, *but I shall take precious good care* to explain in my Preface that the *title only* is retained and not the thing. The new wine in the old bottle, and the sooner the bottle bursts the better. Don't let it alter your notion in the least.

Whitefriars, London: December 17, 1880.

DEAR SIR,—I should like to see you for a few moments here next Tuesday if convenient. It's all right. Dismiss the idea of Essence and being weighed down. We shall make a great hit of it.

F. C. B.

The controversy was happily closed by adoption of a compromise whereby for twenty-eight years the title has run 'Essence of Parliament, Extracted from the Diary of Toby, M.P.' When the first article appeared, Burnand, then and always generous of praise, wrote: 'The "go" of it is capital: the descriptions A1. Success! It's a very good beginning.'

In course of time another character appeared on the stage. This was the Member for Sark, a personage who involved me in constant correspondence. Sir Frank Lockwood told me that one time, visiting the island of Sark, he was approached by an aged inhabitant with a copy of the 'Pall Mall Gazette' Parliamentary Guide, published after the election of the 1885 Parliament. It contained portraits and biographies of all the members. The owner, learning that the Solicitor-General was in the island, thought there was opportunity of solving a difficulty long troubling him, and identifying the Member for Sark.

That was probably one of Lockwood's many inventions. Certainly the inquiries addressed to me at 'Punch' Office grew so persistent that, in order to save time and trouble, I drafted a circular reply, and had it typewritten. 'Toby, M.P., presents his compliments to—, and regrets to state that the identity of the Member for Sark being not entirely his own secret he is not at

liberty to disclose it.' The circular went in the ordinary course to a correspondent in far-off British Columbia. It brought the following shrewd reply :

84 Fourth Street, Victoria, B.C. : September 26, '02.

Mrs. Brocklehurst presents her compliments to Toby, M.P., and thanks him for his very polite answer to her query *re* The Member for Sark. A new light has dawned on her, and she thinks that the Member for Sark exists only in Toby, M.P.'s imagination, or, in the words of Betsy Prigg, she 'don't believe there is no such person.' She hopes, however, that he will long continue to enliven the 'Essence of Parliament.'

To *Essence of Parliament* during part of the time of Shirley Brooks, through the full length of the editorship of Tom Taylor, Linley Sambourne contributed the adornment of beautiful initial letters, with occasional illustration on a larger scale. Burnand proposed that this arrangement should continue. I was delighted with the prospect if it were arranged that Sambourne should be on the spot and draw from life. That proved impracticable, to the loss of the House of Commons and the world generally. I had noticed in 'Punch' from time to time some sketches by an outsider, signed Hy. Furniss. Their humour suggested the very man for collaboration in the new departure contemplated on the Parliamentary page. Burnand, acceding to the suggestion, appointed Furniss to illustrate the Diary, making his drawings from the Lobby of the House of Commons or the Press Gallery. Furniss entered upon the task *con amore* and speedily made a hit, his work contributing greatly to the success of the new enterprise. When in 1894 he resigned his position on the staff, proposing to do something 'on his own,' he was succeeded by E. T. Reed, who in quite another style of work brilliantly succeeded in maintaining the artistic interest of the Diary.

It was one of Phil May's dearest wishes to illustrate the Diary. With time and opportunity, he would have found in the two Houses of Parliament a rare field for his supreme genius. It happened in the early part of the Session of 1902, Reed being temporarily incapacitated by illness, I took Phil May down to the House, lent him my box in the Gallery, took him into the Lobby and pointed out the celebrities. He drew several sketches, which duly appeared, notably, one of Mr. Chamberlain, seated on the Treasury Bench. They had all the charm of his marvellous art. But he was a little uncertain. After hunting all over the place for

him one night I came back to the Gallery to find on my desk the following note :—

MY DEAR LUCY,—Sorry I missed you. Just went upstairs for a few minutes. I am coming again to-morrow to lunch here. I think I can get better stuff by just wandering about, than from the Gallery, as my eyes are not very strong. I have two studies up to now—Lowther and Chamberlain.

I wonder if it would be possible to get a Lobby ticket? It would make things easier, if this can be arranged and you would not mind the trouble. I would be awfully pleased if it could be sent to me at the Devonshire Club.

Sorry, must run off,

Thine,

PHIL MAY.

That was the worst, the only bad, thing about dear Phil. He was always 'just going upstairs,' or 'round the corner for a few minutes.' I got him into the Lobby one night with intent to draw a sketch of Lord Hugh Cecil, at the time much to the fore. By good luck we found him talking to another Member, an estimable but somewhat podgy-figured person, with rubicund countenance and abundant hair. I pointed out to May the tall, slight, stooping figure of Lord Hugh with his intellectual face.

'There's your man, Phil,' I said, 'you have a splendid chance.'

In order not to distract his attention, I left him making mental notes of his subject, sketch books in the hands of artists being forbidden in the Lobby of the House of Commons. I did not see the result of his work till 'Punch' came out the following week, when I discovered that, in the excitement of the moment, probably due to ambiguity in my direction, Phil had got hold of the wrong man, and the podgy person was presented, labelled 'Lord Hugh Cecil.'

On another occasion Phil, in more happy fashion, mixed up two quite different people. I must premise that his coal-black hair was treated in original fashion. It was plastered close to his head, flat over his forehead. When it wanted cutting a closely fitting bowl was apparently placed over the crop, and the scissors run sharply under the edge. The result was rather the appearance of a smooth black shining cap, tightly fitted to the skull, than the ordinary head of hair. My hair, on the contrary, has a life-long constitutional habit of standing straight up, after the fashion of Mr. Traddles. One night, leaving the dinner-table in Bouverie

Street and passing him by the way, I laid my hand on his head and said 'My dear Phil, why do you do your hair like that?'

He turned to regard me with one of his quaint smiles, but said nothing. Next week there appeared portrait sketches of Phil May with his hair bristling at all points, and of me, with my rebellious locks plastered down in his peculiar style. The legend ran: *First Genius to Second Genius*: 'Why on earth do you do your hair in that absurd fashion, Smith?'

The original drawing is just now on view at 'Mr. Punch's Pageant' in the Leicester Galleries.

Phil May, in addition to being one of the finest black-and-white artists that have lived and worked since Charles Keene, was one of the most generous men that ever breathed. Whatever was his in the way of property was anybody else's who might chance to pass by and hold out his hand. At his various haunts—the Savage Club, Romano's, and elsewhere—he became the prey of thirsty idlers. He was always ready to 'stand drinks' or ease himself of the costly cigars that on his entrance filled his pockets. It was the same with his work. A drawing by him, however casual, made the paper on which it was drawn as valuable as a banknote. If anyone admired it, 'Take it, my boy,' was his swift response. 'My boy' took it with such regularity as to threaten depletion of the artist's portfolio. Mrs. May, a shrewd little lady, formed a business habit that checked, though it never stopped, the practice. After one of his informal evenings at home, at which some who had not been invited frequently turned up, Mrs. May made mental notes of raids on the portfolio. The next morning she either wrote to or called upon the connoisseur with polite request for return of the sketch.

It happens that of the men who sat round Mr. Punch's old Mahogany Tree on the night I was admitted within the circle, only two are present at the current Wednesday dinners. One is Linley Sambourne, who enjoys the unique distinction of having served under every editor since 'Punch' was founded. Mark Lemon discovered his talent, and Shirley Brooks encouraged it by placing him on the regular staff, where he worked under Tom Taylor, Burnand, and now with Owen Seaman in the editorial chair. The other relic from those distant days is myself.

In accordance with Mr. Punch's wary habit, I served a considerable period of probation before I joined the regular staff and weekly sat at meat with them in the old dining-room in Bouverie Street. The first chapter of Toby's Diary appeared in January

1881. It was not till Wednesday, July 16, 1884, that Harry Furniss and I joined the sacred table. I believe there were in earlier times occasional exceptions to the rule, but I have never seen an outsider at the Punch Dinner-Table, set in a room as closely 'tiled' as any Freemason's Lodge. When, in 1907, Mark Twain visited England, he was entertained at dinner in the room, and at the table on which are cut the initials of all 'Punch' men since the first. But it was an off day, not the Wednesday dinner.

There were occasions before formal admission to the table, when I was privileged to meet my future colleagues. William Bradbury, partner in the firm of Bradbury, Agnew, the proprietors of 'Punch,' was in charge of the business direction of the paper. Either he or his partner, William Agnew (not yet baroneted), sat in the chair facing the editor, who presided at the Wednesday dinner. Bradbury was never so happy as when he had the staff under his charge, taking them up the river to dine royally at the 'Mitre,' Hampton Court, or driving four-in-hand to some country inn, where we dined and drove home, in the moonlight or the dark. When Burnand succeeded to the editorship, it occurred to William Bradbury to celebrate the occasion by a dinner at the Albion Hotel in the City, a famous hostelry, now, like much else that flourished in those days, passed away. It was a miscellaneous company of some fourscore selected from men distinguished in literature, journalism, and art. After dinner, we played at doing the cartoon for the following week. Each guest was provided with a sheet of notepaper, pen and ink, and invited to make suggestions. I am afraid none contributed to the cartoon as in due time it appeared.

It was in the autumn of 1891 that Gil à Beckett's gentle spirit passed away. Although a confirmed invalid, fighting day and night with a painful disease, he worked on cheerfully to the last, joking and smiling, though he knew Death was at the door. Several weeks previously to being called away, he contributed to 'Punch' quaint accounts of his sojourn at a quiet seaside place, telling how the ruthless deadly organ-grinder found him out. For the previous year he had not been in constant attendance at the weekly dinner. His last appearance was at the Almanac dinner held on October 3, 1891. As usual a bright, kindly smile lighted up his wasted face, and through his talk lambent humour flashed.

The end came suddenly. In final delirium his thoughts turned fondly to the comradeship of which, in days when Thackeray also

sat at the Table, his father was an honoured member. In his last moments he babbled about the 'Punch' cartoon of the coming week, in the invention and perfecting of which he should have no part.

It was he who suggested the historic cartoon bearing the legend 'Dropping the Pilot,' which pictured Bismarck stepping down the gangway from a German man-of-war, the Kaiser looking on from the deck. This was 'Punch's' commentary on the dismissal of the great Chancellor by his headstrong young master.

The Professor's (Percival Leigh) long day was drawing to a close when I came to sit by his side at the 'Punch' table. He still wrote, scarcely a week passing without his sending in an article or a paragraph. With fine courtesy and consideration his manuscript was always set up in type and a proof sent to him. Nothing more came of it. Probably having returned the proof, painstakingly corrected, he forgot all about it, and began again. Anyhow, Mr. Punch, in his generous, paternal fashion, saw that his weekly salary was duly discharged by cheque, and kept a seat for him at the dinner-table. The Professor had Shakespeare at his finger ends, and up to the last occasionally did good service by citation, and appropriate quotation or suggestion of apt title.

It was difficult for those who knew him only in the quiet eventide of his life to realise how prominent a place he once filled in Mr. Punch's Council. When Shirley Brooks was temporarily withdrawn from editorial service by illness or holiday engagement, he handed the reins to the Professor. Why he was styled the Professor no one knew any more than why Tenniel was called 'Jack Ides,' or du Maurier 'Kiki.' Probably it had some relation to his early career, when contemporaneously with Bob Sawyer he walked the hospitals in study of the science of surgery.

In conversation Charles Keene showed no sign of the humour that delighted mankind in his contributions to 'Punch.' He rarely joined in the bright, sometimes rollicking, conversation at the Table.

Shortly after his death, there was published a selection of his letters. Among them were passages which all unconsciously sketched the quaint, archaic personality, with his love of old clothes, old pipes, old anything, and his hatred of everything new, such inevitably savouring of Radicalism, which, in Keene's eyes, was the deadly sin.

One of Keene's few recorded contributions to conversation was

his enthusiastic cry 'Hear, hear!' when at a small dinner party a brother fossil enunciated the axiom, 'The English people were happier and in better circumstances two hundred years ago than they are now.' He honestly believed that, and as far as he could endeavoured to live up to the axiom. It was said of him by one of his colleagues that for him life would have been endurable only for its new moons. To have a new moon every month was an idle phantasy, a display of the cloven foot of Radicalism, a waste of power and material.

During his early career, through many years, he had his studio on the attic floor of an old house in the Strand, a ramshackle place, quitted only when it threatened to tumble down. He was there when he was thirty years younger, and from that period dated, I fancy, the jacket with the leg-of-mutton sleeves in which, when I recall his figure, he always appears. Through a period extending over eight years I never saw him in any other save once, and then, to everybody's surprise, he turned up at an evening party in dinner dress, looking more than usually lugubrious. He got away as soon as he could, and it is easy to imagine the delight with which, when he reached his house in the Hammersmith Road, he got out of 'the toggery,' put on his old jacket, lit his pipe, and growled at Society. Keene had one last surprise for a gossiping world he hated and despised. He died leaving behind him nearly £40,000, scraped together through a self-denying life of hard labour.

On rare occasions, under strong pressure, he was induced to tell his solitary story. It was all about a Bakewell pudding, and, as far as could be made out, related the ecstasy of some unknown person privileged to taste it in perfected form. There was a long catalogue of the component parts leading up to the exclamation which concluded the narrative, 'Ah! that *was* a Bakewell pudding!' The fun came in watching Keene's ordinarily grave face as he worked up to the climax, the wrinkles transformed in the smiles that irradiated his countenance.

One night he startled and delighted the company by breaking fresh ground. 'The other day,' he began, 'I was walking down Kennington Road.' Here there was a pause, and he added 'When I say the other day, I mean forty years ago.' This story had something indefinite to do with the outbreak of Chartism, when Louis Napoleon, in lodgings in London, instinctively enrolled himself on the side of law and order, a Special Constable's baton in hand.

Up to a dozen years ago the business of the weekly dinner was

confined to the work of a single cartoon. Du Maurier, whose sketch faced Tenniel's page, and Linley Sambourne, who regularly contributed his half-page or page, were left to their own devices. Now there are two cartoons, generally political in their subject, each engaging to minutest detail the attention of the staff present. The result is to double the time and labour expended at the dinner. Gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease, and get their 'Punch' at the bookstall on Tuesday night or on Wednesday morning, doubtless believe, if they think about the matter at all, that at some late hour of the previous night the cartoon was 'knocked off,' and went to press just as if it were the leading article in the morning newspaper. As a matter of fact, it is designed exactly a week ahead. Peering through the clouds that hide the future, its devisors, with more or less of prophetic accuracy, attempt to realise how a particular question of the day will present itself a week later.

A tragic historical incident illustrates the immutability of the rule which locks up 'Punch' from editorial revision after the sheets are passed for press on Saturday night. On Friday, May 5, 1882, from my box in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons, I observed Lord Frederick Cavendish seated on the Treasury Bench. He was in his favourite attitude, making as little of himself as possible by twisting his legs together and packing them under the seat. I made some genial observations about him in connexion with current business. It was harmless enough and friendly towards a man whom, three days later, Gladstone in a hushed House of mourning spoke of as 'one of the very noblest hearts ceasing to beat at the moment that he had devoted himself to the service of Ireland, full of love for that country, full of capacity to render her service, full of hope for the future.'

In common with the vast majority present on that Friday night, I was not aware that Lord Frederick had accepted the office of Chief Secretary for Ireland in succession to Forster. He looked in at the House on his way to catch the Irish Mail. It was alack! his last appearance. Late on the following Saturday night news reached the Home Secretary, at a big party given at the Admiralty, that Lord Frederick, walking in Phoenix Park in company with Mr. Burke, the Permanent Under Secretary to the Irish Office, had been assassinated within sight of the window of the Viceregal Lodge whither he was bound. Earl Spencer, looking across the Park from his bedroom window, actually saw the murderous

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tussle. Thinking it was some men larking, he took no further notice of the incident.

Early on Sunday morning I went down to the printing office with intention to delete from Toby's Diary a passage which, innocent in itself, would, published four days after the tragedy, appear unseemly in its levity. The forme was locked, but happily had not gone to press. All that could be done was to take out the paragraph, leaving a blank space, which will be found to-day in the bound volume—a sort of white stone raised to the memory of hapless Lord Frederick.

To prepare a week in advance a picture designed to illustrate the actual political situation of the hour was comparatively easy in the times of Mark Lemon and even of Shirley Brooks, when the penny paper was not, and the electric telegraph fretted in its infancy. Those were good old East-Indiaman-round-the-Cape days, when news travelled slowly, and the interval of a week was, in respect of news, equivalent to the space of time between night and morning as it is counted now. Yet it is perfectly marvellous how rarely 'Punch' has been caught tripping, how regularly it comes out with its cartoon so directly hitting the nail on the head as to leave undisturbed the popular impression alluded to, of the blow having been poised only on the night before.

A memorable exception arose in connexion with the march to the relief of Gordon. When on the last Wednesday in January 1885 the staff met at dinner, the latest news from the Soudan showed the relief column almost within touch of Khartoum. It was clear that nothing could stop them, the only doubt being whether news of Gordon's deliverance would reach London before the publication of the next number, or would immediately follow it. The topic asserted itself, and the only question to be debated was its method of treatment. This was settled by Tenniel drawing a picture showing Sir Charles Wilson's arrival at Khartoum with the remnant of the gallant force Stewart had led through the desert past Abu Klea. Gordon steps forward grasping both hands of his deliverer, while the group of soldiers in the background madly cheer. Within a few hours of the publication of 'Punch' the telegraph flashed the news 'Khartoum taken by the Mahdi. General Gordon's fate uncertain.' Immediately after came news of Gordon's death, and next week the cartoon showed Britannia, with sword in right hand, left arm hiding weeping eyes, the picture bearing the simple legend 'Too Late!'

On Wednesday, January 13, 1892, we were in something of a similar quandary. Recollection of the former mishap imposed exceptional caution. The Duke of Clarence lay ill at Sandringham, almost on the eve of his appointed marriage with the Princess May of Teck. On Tuesday, January 12, the bulletin seemed to point to early recovery. On the next day, when Mr. Punch held council at the dinner-table, a turn for the worse was taken. Successive bulletins gave the case the gravest aspect. The Duke might linger on for a week, at the end of that time struggling into convalescence or drooping into the grave. In the meantime 'Punch' must have its cartoon, and the subject must be settled on this very night.

One other subject would have been adopted without discussion, save for the peril of the young Duke. Tewfik Pacha had just died, and his son, Abbas, was proclaimed Khedive. Within the next few days he would arrive at Alexandria, escorted by a British fleet. Here was our subject ready to hand. But supposing anything happened to the eldest son of the Heir Apparent between now and next Wednesday, it would not do for 'Punch' to come out with its principal cartoon, however well done, devoted to the succession to the Khedival Throne.

We got over the difficulty by the simple but not unlaborious plan of devising two cartoons, so as to be equal to either fate. On the next morning the Duke of Clarence died, and on the Wednesday following 'Punch' came out with its principal cartoon, drawn by Tenniel, devoted to a single figure, the darkly cloaked form of the Angel of Death bearing away the bridal wreath. It bore the legend 'January 14, 1892.' The second cartoon by Linley Sambourne, 'the Under Cut,' as it was called at the dinner-table, showed the young Khedive landing at Alexandria, received by the British Lion in blue-jacket garb, exclaiming, as he extended his hand, 'I helped your father, and I'll stand by you.'

XXXI.

SIR FRANCIS BURNAND.

THE appointment of Frank Burnand to the editorship of 'Punch,' on vacation of the chair by Tom Taylor, was hailed with general acclaim. Here was the right man in the right place, the square peg

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in the square hole. The soul of humour himself, Burnand quickly recognised its flashes in others, and was ever on the look-out to secure desirable recruits for Mr. Punch's service. With one exception, the staff carrying on the work to-day were all selected and appointed during the term of his editorship. When he became editor, he found himself splendidly supported on the artistic side. Tenniel, Keene, du Maurier, and Linley Sambourne were a quartette that preserved the ancient renown of 'Punch' pictures. Burnand turned his attention to strengthening the literary wing of the staff.

His success was marked by an observation made in the late Eighties by Mr. James Bryce, now British Minister at Washington: 'I used formerly to look through the pictures in "Punch" and lay the number down; now I read it through.'

While still in the full enjoyment of health, Burnand, in whatsoever company he found himself, bubbled with humour. He was at his very best presiding at the 'Punch' table. It is a pity no record was made of the good things he flashed forth at every sitting. We laughed and forgot. One I remember, perhaps because it was outside the constellation that shone on Wednesday nights. He and I were talking in the crowded assembly at the Foreign Office on one of the Queen's Birthday nights. A guest in uniform, starred and medalled, came up and effusively shook hands with Burnand whose reception betrayed some embarrassment. Observing this the new comer said:

'I see you don't know me from Adam.'

'My dear Sir,' said Burnand, 'I didn't know Adam.'

Tired out myself with long discussion on an especially difficult cartoon, I often admired and envied the patience displayed by Burnand. He listened to every suggestion, weighed and appraised it, attending carefully to comments. No pains were too great, no devotion of time too lavish, if in the end the right thing was hit upon.

With all his geniality he had that reserve force of autocracy necessary to one in his position. I never inquired into the circumstances, but I fancy some ebullition of this character led to what might have proved a serious matter. As far as it touched me personally, I have kept the secret for eleven years. As there is no discredit to anyone concerned, and as it pointed to a momentous turn proposed in the life some passages of which are here recorded, there is no reason why I should not mention the episode.

Every year, on the eve of the opening of the Royal Academy Exhibition, Sir Henry Tate, founder of the Picture Gallery which bears his honoured name, gave a banquet at his house at Streatham, the guests being Royal Academicians or Associates. By some chance I was regularly invited to join the charmed circle, being the only layman present with the exception of Sir William Agnew, whose long and intimate connexion with painting and painters made his comradeship more natural. Driving to Streatham he was good enough to pick me up at Ashley Gardens, safely delivering me home after a cheerful dinner.

On one of these occasions (April 28, 1897) he, abruptly turning the conversation, offered me the editorship of 'Punch.'

'What about Burnand?' I asked.

He explained that differences had arisen between the editor and the proprietors, which confirmed the latter in the slowly formed resolution of making a change.

If Agnew had offered me his brougham and the pair of horses that were trundling us down to Streatham I should have been far less surprised. It was a glittering prize dangled before appreciative eyes. At the time I would rather have been editor of 'Punch' than Emperor of India. Of all positions on the British Press it is to my mind at once the most honourable and the most honoured. The temptation was supreme. I don't think it cost me two minutes' hesitation before it was put aside. I could get along very well as I was. For Burnand the severance from the paper with which his name had been so long associated would be a cruel blow, not only to his pride, but to his prospects as a bread-winner.

I told Agnew that, much as I valued the honour done me, I could not accept it to the deposition of the man who gave me my first footing on 'Punch,' and whose friendship I had enjoyed for fifteen years. Agnew would not accept the refusal, insisting that I should, as he put it, sleep over the matter. I slept accordingly very comfortably, and on the following day sent him the subjoined letter:

42 Ashley Gardens, Victoria Street, S.W.: 29, 4, '97.

MY DEAR AGNEW,—Referring to our conversation yesterday evening, I have carefully thought it over, and am confirmed in the intense impression I endeavoured to convey to you.

I regard the editorship of 'Punch' as the blue ribbon of the English Press. That I should have been thought worthy to have it offered to me gives me sincere pleasure. But, my dear Agnew, I do not forget that F. C. B. brought me on the 'Punch' staff. I

could not under any possible arrangement of circumstances be a party to his supersession to my personal and professional advantage.

With many thanks and sincere esteem,

I am, yours faithfully,

HENRY W. LUCY.

Having thus obtained a *locus standi*, I had the great pleasure of acting as mediator between the temporarily estranged friends. Of course Burnand knew nothing about the conversation on the drive to Streatham. Till these lines appear in print no one outside the brougham does, with the exception of my wife, who (for a woman) is singularly trustworthy.

By exception I did not share the proverbial fate of those who in a quarrel interpose. On the contrary, when the sun shone again in Bouverie Street, Burnand wrote a letter acknowledging with exaggerated appreciation my services in the matter. Sir William Agnew was not less generous in his commentary, and we lived happily ever afterwards, or, to be precise, for another nine years.

William Agnew—Sir William, Bart., as he became somewhat tardily in view of his claims upon the party with which he was associated in times of adversity as well as in prosperity—was thoroughly imbued with the spirit and traditions of 'Punch.' He was never so happy as when entertaining the staff at dinner in his house in Great Stanhope Street, or when occupying the vice-chair at the Wednesday dinner. In later years, advancing age bringing its troubles and disabilities, he disappeared from the scene, to the regret especially of the older members of the staff whose acquaintance was more intimate, and therefore more affectionate.

42 Ashley Gardens, Victoria Street, 1897.

MY DEAR AGNEW,—I have always intended that, when my pilgrimage to Bouverie Street on Wednesday evenings shall cease, my colleagues and their successors in the old room should be in possession of the portraits of Burnand and Tenniel, painted for me by E. A. Ward. I hereby bequeath them. Mrs. Lucy is aware of my intention, and I expect that my executors will observe it on presentation of this letter. But if you can suggest any more formal and effective way in which the desire can be carried out it shall be done.

The only condition I make is that on each of the frames shall be let in a small plate with the inscription: 'Presented by Toby, M.P., to his colleagues and companions round the old Mahogany Tree.' Here to follow the day and year of my death. The pictures are to

be the possession of the 'Punch' staff, to hang in their dining-room.

With kind regards,
Yours faithfully,

HENRY W. LUCY.

'Your generosity touches me,' Agnew wrote. 'I can say no more; I will consider the way your wishes were best made operative, and bless you for your loyalty to old "Punch."'

Seven years later I sat to Sargent for my own portrait, which will also finally join the new company of my two old friends and colleagues in the dining-room where through many years we weekly sat at meat.

11 Great Stanhope Street, W.: April 19, 1904.

MY DEAR LUCY,—I have just come in from the New Gallery, and I cannot refrain from writing to say that I saw what I think is the finest portrait by *Sargent ever painted*, that of H. W. Lucy.

You and he are to be congratulated.

Yours very truly,
WM. AGNEW.

When I informed Burnand of my intention to bequeath the portraits to the 'Punch' table he shrewdly suggested the desirability of a time limit. It is the present historic proprietary and the companionship of which I have been a member for a quarter of a century I desired to benefit. In these days of quick change of the *personnel* of newspaper proprietors no one can say what a year may bring forth. Adopting his view I varied the original intention, leaving the portraits in Mr. Punch's keeping for ten years, begging him thereafter to offer them to the authorities of the National Portrait gallery.

(Conclusion.)

BACCHUS AND THE PIRATES.

HALF a hundred terrible pig-tails, pirates famous in song and story,
 Hoisting the old black flag once more, in a palmy harbour of
 Caribbee,
 'Farewell' we waved to our negro lasses, and chorussing out to
 the billows of glory,
 Billows a-glitter with rum and gold, we followed the sunset over
 the sea.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 Our capstan song we sung :
 Half a hundred broad-sheet pirates
 When the world was young !*

Sea-roads plated with pieces of eight that rolled to a heaven by
 rum made mellow,
 Heaved and coloured our barque's black nose where the Lascar
 sang to a twinkling star,
 And the tangled bow-sprit plunged and dipped its point in the
 West's wild red and yellow,
 Till the curved white moon crept out astern like a naked knife
 from a blue cymar.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 Our capstan song we sung :
 Half a hundred terrible pirates
 When the world was young !*

Half a hundred tarry pig-tails,—Teach, the chewer of glass, had
 taught us,
 Taught us to balance the plank ye walk, your little plank-bridge
 to Kingdom Come :
 Half a score had sailed with Flint, and a dozen or so the devil had
 brought us
 Back from the pit where Blackbeard lay, in Beelzebub's bosom,
 a-screech for rum.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 Our capstan song we sung :
 Half a hundred piping pirates
 When the world was young !*

There was Captain Hook (of whom ye have heard—so called from
his terrible cold steel twister,

His own right hand having gone to a shark with a taste for
skippers on pirate-trips),

There was Silver himself, with his cruel crutch, and the blind man
Pew, with a phiz like a blister,

Gouged and white and dreadfully dried in the reek of a thousand
burning ships.

While earth goes round, let rum go round,

Our capstan song we sung :

Half a hundred cut-throat pirates

When the world was young !

With our silver buckles and French cocked hats and our skirted
coats (they were growing greener,

But green and gold look well when spliced ! We'd trimmed
'em up wi' some fine fresh lace)

Bravely over the seas we danced to the horn-pipe tune of a con-
certina,

Cutlasses jetting beneath our skirts and cambric handkerchiefs
all in place.

While earth goes round, let rum go round,

Our capstan song we sung :

Half a hundred elegant pirates

When the world was young !

And our black prow grated, one golden noon, on the happiest isle
of the Happy Islands,

An isle of Paradise, fair as a gem, on the sparkling breast of the
wine-dark deep,

An isle of blossom and yellow sand, and enchanted vines on the
purple highlands,

Wi' grapes like melons, nay clustering suns, a-sprawl over cliffs
in their noonday sleep.

While earth goes round, let rum go round,

Our capstan song we sung :

Half a hundred dream-struck pirates

When the world was young !

And lo ! on the soft warm edge of the sand, where the sea like wine
 in a golden noggin
 Creamed, and the rainbow-bubbles clung to his flame-red hair,
 a white youth lay,
 Sleeping ; and now, as his drowsy grip relaxed, the cup that he
 squeezed his grog in
 Slipped from his hand and its purple dregs were mixed with the
 flames and flakes of spray.

*He'd only a leopard-skin around
 His chest, whereas we sung :
 Half a hundred diffident pirates
 When the world was young !*

And we suddenly saw (had we seen them before ? They were
 coloured like sand or the pelt on his shoulders)
 His head was pillowed on two great leopards, whose breathing
 rose and sank with his own ;
 Now a pirate is bold, but the vision was rum and would call for rum
 in the best of beholders,
 And it seemed we had seen Him before, in a dream, with that
 flame-red hair and that vine-leaf crown.

*And the earth went round, and the rum went round,
 And softer now we sung :
 Half a hundred awe-struck pirates
 When the world was young !*

Now Timothy Hook (of whom ye have heard, with his talon of
 steel) our doughty skipper,
 A man that, in youth being brought up pious, had many a book
 on his cabin-shelf,
 Suddenly caught at a comrade's hand with the tearing claws of his
 cold steel flipper
 And cried, 'Great Thunder and Brimstone, boys, I've hit it at
 last ! 'Tis Bacchus Himself !'

*And the earth went round, and the rum went round,
 And never a word we sung :
 Half a hundred tottering pirates
 When the world was young !*

He flung his French cocked hat i' the foam (though its lace was the best of his wearing apparel).

We stared at him—Bacchus! the sea reeled round like a wine-vat splashing with purple dreams,

And the sunset-skies were dashed with blood of the grape, as the sun, like a new-staved barrel,

Flooded the tumbling West with wine and spattered the clouds with crimson gleams.

And the earth went round, and our heads went round,

And never a word we sung :

Half a hundred staggering pirates

When the world was young !

Down to the ship for a fishing-net our crafty Hook sent Silver leaping ;

Back he came on his pounding crutch, for all the world like a kangaroo ;

And we caught the net and up to the Sleeper on hands and knees we all went creeping,

Flung it across him and staked it down ! 'Twas the best of our dreams and the dream was true.

And the earth went round, and the rum went round,

And loudly now we sung :

Half a hundred jubilant pirates

When the world was young !

We had caught our god, and we got him aboard ere he woke (he was more than a little heavy).

Glittering, beautiful, flushed he lay in the lurching bows of the old black barque,

As the sunset died and the white moon dawned, and we saw on the island a star-bright bevy

Of naked Bacchanals stealing to watch through the whispering vines in the purple dark !

While earth goes round, let rum go round,

Our capstan song we sung :

Half a hundred innocent pirates

When the world was young !

Beautiful under the sailing moon, in the tangled net, with the
 leopards beside him,
 Snared like a wild young red-lipped merman, wilful, petulant,
 flushed he lay ;
 While Silver and Hook in their big sea-boots and their boat-cloaks
 guarded and gleefully eyed him,
 Thinking what Bacchus might do for a seaman, like standing him
 drinks, as a man might say.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 We sailed away and sung :
 Half a hundred fanciful pirates
 When the world was young !*

All the grog that ever was heard of, gods, was it stowed in our sure
 possession ?

O, the pictures that breached the skies and poured their colours
 across our dreams !
 O, the thoughts that tapped the sunset and rolled like a great
 torchlight procession
 Down our throats in a glory of glories, a roaring splendour of
 golden streams !

*And the earth went round, and the stars went round,
 As we hauled the sheets and sung :
 Half a hundred infinite pirates
 When the world was young !*

Beautiful, white, at the break of day, He woke and, the net in a
 smoke dissolving,

He rose like a flame, with his yellow-eyed pards and his flame-
 red hair like a windy dawn,
 And the crew kept back, respectful like, till the leopards advanced
 with their eyes revolving,
 Then up the rigging went Silver and Hook, and the rest of us
 followed with case-knives drawn.

*While earth goes round, let rum go round,
 Our cross-tree song we sung :
 Half a hundred terrified pirates
 When the world was young !*

And 'Take me home to my happy island!' he says. 'Not I,' sings
 Hook, 'by thunder;
 We'll take you home to a happier isle, our palmy harbour of
 Caribbee!'
 'You won't?' says Bacchus, and quick as a dream the planks of
 the deck just heaved asunder,
 And a mighty Vine came straggling up that grew from the depths
 of the wine-dark sea.

*And the sea went round, and the skies went round,
 As our cross-tree song we sung:
 Half a hundred horrified pirates
 When the world was young!*

We were anchored fast as an oak on land, and the branches clutched
 and the tendrils quickened,
 And bound us writhing like snakes to the spars! Ay, we hacked
 with our knives at the boughs in vain,
 And Bacchus laughed loud on the decks below, as ever the tough
 sprays tightened and thickened,
 And the blazing hours went by, and we gaped with thirst and
 our ribs were racked with pain.

*And the skies went round, and the sea swam round,
 And we knew not what we sung:
 Half a hundred lunatic pirates
 When the world was young!*

Bunch upon bunch of sunlike grapes, as we writhed and struggled
 and raved and strangled,
 Bunch upon bunch of gold and purple daubed its bloom on our
 baked black lips.
 Clustering grapes, O, bigger than pumpkins, just out of reach they
 bobbed and dangled
 Over the vine-entangled sails of that most dumbfounded of
 pirate ships!

*And the sun went round, and the moon came round,
 And mocked us where we hung:
 Half a hundred maniac pirates
 When the world was young!*

Over the waters the white moon winked its bruised old eye at our
bowery prison,
When suddenly we were aware of a light such as never a moon
or a ship's lamp throws,
And a shallop of pearl, like a Nautilus shell, came shimmering up
as by magic arisen,
With sails of silk and a glory around it that turned the sea to a
rippling rose.

*And our heads went round, and the stars went round,
At the song that cruiser sung :
Half a hundred goggle-eyed pirates
When the world was young !*

Half a hundred rose-white Bacchanals hauled the ropes of that rosy
cruiser !

Over the seas they came and laid their little white hands on the
old black barque ;
And Bacchus he ups and he steps aboard : ' Hi, stop ! ' cries Hook,
' You frantic old boozer !
Belay, below there, don't you go and leave poor pirates to die
in the dark ! '

*And the moon went round, and the stars went round,
As they all pushed off and sung :
Half a hundred ribbonless Bacchanals
When the world was young !*

Over the seas they went and Bacchus he stands, with his yellow-
eyed leopards beside him,
High on the poop of rose and pearl, and kisses his hand to us,
pleasant as pie !
While the Bacchanals danced to their tambourines, and the vine-
leaves flew, and Hook just eyed him
Once, as a man that was brought up pious, and scornfully hollers,
' Well, you ain't shy ! '

*For all around him, vine-leaf crowned,
The wild white Bacchanals flung !
Nor it wasn't a sight for respectable pirates
When the world was young !*

All around that rainbow-Nautilus rippled the bloom of a thousand roses,

Nay, but the sparkle of fairy sea-nymphs breasting a fairy-like sea of wine,

Swimming around it in murmuring thousands, with white arms tossing ; till—all that *we* knows is

The light went out, and the night was dark, and the grapes had burst and their juice was—brine !

*And the vines that bound our bodies round
Were plain wet ropes that clung :
Squeezing the light out o' fifty pirates
When the world was young !*

Over the seas in the pomp of dawn a king's ship came with her proud flag flying ;

Cloud upon cloud we watched her tower with her belts and her crowded zones of sail ;

And an A.B. perched in a white crow's nest, with a brass-rimmed spy-glass quietly spying,

As we swallowed the lumps in our choking throats and uttered our last faint feeble hail !

*And our heads went round as the ship went round,
And we thought how coves had swung :
All for playing at broad-sheet pirates
When the world was young !*

Half a hundred trembling corsairs, all cut loose, but a trifle giddy,

We lands on their trim white decks at last and the bo'sun he whistles us good hot grog,

And we tries to confess, but there wasn't a soul from the Admiral's self to the gold-laced middy

But says, ' They're delirious still, poor chaps,' and the Cap'n he enters the fact in his log.

*That his boat's crew found us nearly drowned
In a barrel without a bung—
Half a hundred suffering sea-cooks
When the world was young !*

So we sailed by Execution Dock, where the swinging pirates haughty
and scornful

Rattled their chains, and on Margate beach we came like a school-
treat safe to land ;

And one of us took to religion at once ; and the rest of the crew,
tho' their hearts were mournful,

Capered about as Christy Minstrels, while Hook conducted the
big brass band.

And the sun went round, and the moon went round,

And, O, 'twas a thought that stung !

There was none to believe we were broad-sheet pirates

When the world was young !

Ah, yet (if ye stand me a noggin of rum) shall the old Blue Dolphin
echo the story !

We'll hoist the white cross-bones again in our palmy harbour of
Caribbee !

We'll wave farewell to our negro lasses and, chorussing out to the
billows of glory,

Billows a-glitter with rum and gold, we'll follow the sunset over
the sea !

While earth goes round, let rum go round !

O, sing it as we sung !

Half a hundred terrible pirates

When the world was young !

ALFRED NOYES.

MANCHURIA—IN THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS

Of all the various qualities required by the soldier few occupy such a peculiar position as the faculty of an accurate imagination. In peace training it is not only useful but absolutely essential (provided it be kept within the limits of scientific strategy and correct tactics) for the development of situations and of circumstances invoking on the part of those engaged a corresponding capacity to imagine, but if it strays into the region of the theoretically improbable it is apt to become dangerous in its instructional results.

And here the theories of peace and the records of war are at variance; for in war the improbable is so prone to happen that he whose imaginative powers fail to rise within the limits of foresight to the possibility of the occurrence of improbabilities, is apt to be misled into disappointing and perhaps disastrous situations.

Take for instance Napoleon in two '*coups manqués*'—the one when pushing across the Douro in his great winter march from Madrid in December 1808 he failed to intercept Sir John Moore, because, allowing his imagination too free a rein, he assumed that all information pointed to that general being considerably further South and East of the Carrion country than he in reality was; the other when, having pierced the Anglo-Allied and Prussian protective line along the Sambre and Meuse in 1815 and won the day at Ligny, he concluded that, placed as he was between the two armies, the certain result would be retreat by his foes along the divergent Antwerp and Maestricht Cologne lines of communication, and failed to imagine it possible that Blücher, disregarding all theories and maxims of war, would daringly cut himself adrift from his communications, and by manœuvring for position for a flank march westward, be prepared to deliver that counter-stroke the promise of which alone decided Wellington to accept battle in the defensive Waterloo position. To that counter-stroke the Duke himself has recorded the memorable victory of that bloodstained summer Sunday was principally due.

How then is the instructor and framer of ideas in time of peace to strike the balance? How is he at once to restrain riotous and

inaccurate imagination, and yet encourage a safe suggestion of the improbable?

The question first presented itself forcibly to my mind when, during a recent training season in Ireland, it was my privilege to devise a scheme for the testing in competition of the scouts of the infantry battalions of the Ulster command. The matter arose in this way: Those responsible for the training of the troops at Irish headquarters had been devoting in general much study to the various phases of the Manchurian campaign, and in particular to the use of foot-scouts in that portion of Manchuria which, by reason of its mountainous nature, was unsuited to the use of the cavalry soldier for reconnaissance.

It is well known that in this branch of military science the Japanese had been hard at work ever since about 1896, whereas it is only in recent years, and at first in a limited degree, that the subject has received due consideration in the British army, in spite too of the fact that General Baden-Powell's familiar handbook was in general use, and that he and others had been trying to point out that true scouting consists in higher form reconnaissance based upon a thorough grasp of situation and of orders. Yet infantry scouting had sometimes degenerated into mere advance skirmishing, instead of retaining its place in the category of military science in priority to any preliminary or protective movement, although our own admirable text-book on Combined Training lays down the broad principles in clear and simple language. It was felt we were drifting from the true character of this highly scientific branch of training, so, after considerable inquiry, attention was drawn to broad principles from headquarters, and in order to stimulate study it was announced that Field-Marshal (then General) Lord Grenfell, commanding in Ireland, had decided to present a scouts' cup¹ to be competed for by groups of four from each infantry battalion.

Competitions lasting throughout day and night were to take place in each brigade, the winners to compete in divisional contests, those then victorious to compete in the final, and it fell to my lot to receive the circular letter endorsed to the effect that for the North Irish Brigade I was to choose an area, devise a scheme, and select my assistant directors and umpires.

The first consideration was country.

Away in the North the highlands of Donegal or the rugged

¹ Won by the 30th (XXX) East Lancshires. Competition held in Dublin mountains.

peninsula of Innishowen were available, while on the East coast there was that rough mountain area of the County Down which lies between Carlingford Lough and Newcastle—the storm-swept, historic, grey granite barony of Mourne, above which towers to near 3000 feet the boldly moulded Slieve Donard.

The mountains, valleys, and shores of Mourne are not unaccustomed to the footstep of the soldier, for in this district, from time immemorial, strategy and leadership, tactical talent and courage have left their marks and their memories. The beauty and peace of this lovely country stand out in sharp contrast to the stormy stories of war which meet one on all sides, for here the Magennises and Macartans battled for the causes which they embraced, and Shane O'Neill's prowess is still a hillside tradition; the silent earth has yielded to the antiquary brass and bronze and flint, eloquent of bygone struggles, while on both sides of Carlingford Lough rise grim castles, strongholds of the past, recalling the names of stirring periods and famous leaders.

Carlingford (on the South-Western shore of the Lough) is still rich in coign and curve and battlement, in monastery and mint, in arch and ivied wall; Greencastle on the South-Eastern side echoes memories of Walter de Burgo its builder, of Edward Bruce its conqueror, of Cromwell its dismantler; Narrow Water Castle revives the story of Hugh and Walter de Lacy, and of their bitter feud with John de Courcy, the great Anglo-Norman figure of Ulster in the twelfth century; Newry can boast of a history in the annals of strife hardly equalled by any town in the war-stricken story of Ireland. We selected this area as the most suitable.

Rostrevor, our headquarters, whose name is said to be a memorial of the love-story and marriage of Rose, daughter of Sir Marmaduke Whitchurch, and of Trevor, son of Viscount Dungannon, afterwards, tradition declares, altered from Rose Trevor to Rostrevor to commemorate the death of General Ross of Bladensburg (the family seat is here) at Baltimore in 1814, was once the Castle Rory of the redoubtable Rory Magennis.

On all sides are memories and traditions rich in records of the science of war.

Yet not on these grounds alone is the country suited to military study and manœuvre, the very names being suggestive of the particular object which we had in view, viz. higher form reconnaissance under Manchurian conditions, for as in the mountains of Manchuria the Sungari river rises in the Shan a lin range, so here

at the foot of the slopes of Shan lieve the Kilbroney river has its source.

Kinnahalla, lying between hill and plain, has a curiously foreign sound, while at the Northern point of this mountain district runs a stream whose nomenclature is such, that anyone ignorant of its whereabouts and asked to guess at its geographical position would probably immediately say 'Somewhere in Asia.' The stream is called the Shimna river, the area, the Shimna river valley.

Thus at the outset we had ample aid to imagination, a good foundation on which to build the structure of hypothetical manoeuvre.

My judges were selected from cavalry and infantry, and included experts in the work. One had spent his early life in the bush of a far-distant colony, and had won his way in the South African war from the ranks of a Colonial corps to a captaincy and the adjutancy of a smart British Cavalry regiment; another distinguished in the same campaign was a ready deviser of schemes requiring all the arts of the true scout; a third (and he spent his night in the mountains during the competition counter-scouting the competing scouts) had played the game for many a risky hour in South Africa.

Preliminary work began by a careful reconnaissance of the country by ourselves with compass and camera, map and sketching-books, and it was hot, for the sun pours into those valleys with an ardour which would scorch all else but this evergreen series of watersheds; yet the interest of the work was absorbing, and the beauty of the country on those summer days beyond compare, while incidents were not wanting to give occasionally a lighter touch to relieve the labour.

'Why,' said I to one lone countryman, 'is that mountain called Shan lieve?' pronouncing it as spelt. 'You're the first that used the name' was the reply. 'What is the name then?' said I. 'Sharn lee,' said he, pronouncing it much as a Chinaman would say 'Sha ho,' drawling the first syllable and cutting the second very short. Then a long laugh and 'You've an odd way of usin' the tongue.' 'Well,' said I, 'why are those other two called Cock and Hen Mountain?' (Nothing Manchurian about that.) 'I could not say' was the reply. 'I never heard the one crow, or heard of the other layin' eggs, but when ye get to the bog, the bog steward will tell you, he's a knowin' man.'

On we went to the bog, and there we met the bog steward, a perfect gem of a self-confident gasbag, who started talking before

we got a word in edgeways. He was a big-bodied, big-voiced individual, who seemed to be looked upon with great awe by the simple-minded, shy turf-cutters working near him. He asked our business; we told him. He poured out information to the evident admiration of his turbary team, then he made a still higher bid for their regard, and, turning to them, said: 'Now, boys, wait till I tell yez'—with a heavy emphasis on the I—'these gentlemen are larnin' souldiers to find their way through the mountains to the say (sea), and there'll be little trouble in that because they has ship's compasses to find their way to the wather.' 'But,' said a young worker, with the courage born of youth, 'how will the souldiers first find the mountains?'

'All mountains is in ranges,' said the great man, 'and all souldiers has range-finders; 'tis simple enough.'

We congratulated him upon his knowledge and did not correct him. It is a pity to reduce in any way the influence of such local deities; and we were rewarded by ultimately obtaining an exceedingly minute and accurate description of our miniature Manchuria.

That evening we elaborated our plan, and at once found ourselves face to face with the difficulty of combining vivid and accurate imagination with a safe suggestion of the improbable; so we appealed to ancient history for causes and leaders, to the days of Napoleon for strategy, and to modern times for armament.

Once again a King of Ireland was at Newry, and his country was at war with the King of the Isle of Man, as was the case in early Irish days; but the modern Manx monarch was very much up to date, for he had landed in Strangford Lough in the most approved latter-day style by means of flat-bottomed lighters, and had effected a footing and so disposed his forces as to hold efficiently a very considerable extent of country. We allotted to him a force one-third of the strength of that commanded by Wellington and Blücher in the Netherlands in 1815 and an area equal to one-third of the frontage covered by those two commanders; we presented him with a small fleet of shallow-draught gunboats armed with quickfiring and patrolling the waters along the coast road of Carlingford Lough so as to make any movement by the King of Ireland by that route impossible; and as this raiding force had reduced the principal inland main road to a state of semi-uselessness for rapid movement the Irish monarch had a sufficiently difficult task to face. Round about historic Newry the Irish Army lay encamped, the King of Ireland commanding in person, but he too had studied history

and his eagle eye at once detected that the King of the Isle of Man had spread his force in such a way that a swift, sharp stroke at the centre would pierce his line, cut off half his force from the sea, and result in the capture of a large store depot which he had established.

Information as to the open country was ample and to spare, the roads were well known and thoroughly mapped, yet no one had ever imagined it possible that any adversary would render these useless and by his dominant strategy leave to the defender the choice either of elaborate manœuvre or of moving his forces through the mountains; consequently the knowledge at the disposal of the Irish Sovereign as to this area was very limited and the district poorly reconnoitred, while, worse still, the Irish cavalry for purposes of economy and supply were in distant cantonments, recalling memories of the Valley of the Dender.

Swift movement, secrecy, and, above all, thoroughly accurate reconnaissance and report were absolutely essential to success, combined with tactics which by their daring and disregard of difficulty would outpace the imagination of the Manxman.

There was no time to wait for the cavalry, the whole army must advance, picked infantry scouts must carry out the reconnaissance and everything must be in readiness when their work was complete (by which time the mounted troops would have arrived) to press forward through the mountains and attack the invaders. Away to the North a strong line of outposts observing those of the enemy was established, those to the West of the line being strengthened at intervals somewhat ostentatiously, so as to mislead the foe, for the King of Ireland knew his Napoleonic history and recollected how in 1815 by tactics such as that, the fear of his right being turned became with Wellington such an ever-present dread that concentration was delayed.

On July 9 this imaginary army, well equipped in every way, arrived in Kilbroney river valley, and immediately despatched picked foot-scouts, keen, hard-trained, intelligent men, with every sense—sight, touch, hearing, and smell—acute, able to endure fatigue, to observe accurately, to map and sketch, to understand the general situation, to report what they had seen, and what evidence they had acquired of the enemy's movements.

In this hypothetical situation lay the ground plan of our scheme. Let us now pass to the actual task set to the scouts, to the test of merit applied, and to the quality of the work done.

Late in the afternoon the competitors arrived, groups of four, from the 1st Battn. the Connaught Rangers, 1st Battn. the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Battn. the West Yorkshire Regiment, 4th Battalion the Middlesex Regiment, and after a good square meal we made our way to the Kilbroney river valley, an ideal spot for the encampment of an army, for we were careful to choose ground which should be technically correct. Through the centre crossed by a strong stone bridge runs the Kilbroney river, affording an ample supply of excellent water, clear as crystal and glittering beneath the rays of the evening sun. The artillery lines were pointed out, the section selected for the cavalry met with the warm approval of the cavalry officers, the line of the distant protective screen was indicated, and all the information necessary to a full understanding of the distribution of the Irish Army and its objective was dealt with, but imagination had to supply the stir and bustle of such a scene, for nothing broke the stillness of the summer evening except the shrill sweep of the swift or the plaintive note of the green plover, while in the distance one heard the thump, thump, ceaseless and persistent, of the beetling mill, a favourite industry in the valleys of Down and Antrim.

Cars were dismissed and the competing groups fell in for preliminary examination, to every man being given a card setting forth his name, rank and regiment, and indicating the brigade address at Belfast, for the country is difficult and the bog holes dangerous, there might be claims for trespass, or accident might perchance result in a sick or injured soldier being temporarily aided by a mountain shepherd.

This examination consisted in a careful scrutiny of compasses, field-glasses, &c., and in tests of commonsense applied to invisibility of kit and accoutrement, preparation of boots, nature of food and drink carried, in fact of everything which dealt with capacity to reconnoitre, to stand the strain and to avoid detection. Marking sheets dealing in detail with every point were prepared, a maximum being granted subject to deduction for errors in any of the points enumerated.

Some men had their boots highly polished as if for parade instead of being greased and softened for the heavy work, others lost marks for polished buttons or highly whitened belts, another had no knife to sharpen his sketching pencil in case the point was broken, some had food utterly unsuited for bodily sustenance throughout the twenty-two hours which constituted the length of

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the task, and all these points and many others have their primary importance which was duly indicated.

Then came the brief inquiry as to group calls, for scouts reconnoitring and having to separate and meet again in the dusk, as these had to, require some means of communication. Thus we found that one group had none at all, while others had selected the method of whistling regimental or regulation calls.

When it was pointed out to one group-leader that these were calculated to intimate to an enemy's scouts (for military calls are peculiarly easy of detection) that a soldier of some sort was on foot, and that therefore secrecy, the first rule of scouting, was impaired, he immediately informed me that General Baden-Powell's book advised that a whistle such as at 'March at Ease' was the best signal. 'It uses the words the best,' he said.

I explained the objection and indicated to him that imitations of bird-notes suited to the district were far better, such as the plover, the curlew, or the cuckoo, for the two former will call after dark if disturbed by man or beast, and in these hills (especially near the coast) I have heard the cuckoo at all hours of the night; or even the bleating of mountain-sheep or lambs was suggested as suitable, for we sought to instruct as well as to judge. Such sounds we showed could be doubled or trebled according to arrangement.

I have been with scouts on a night attack using bird-notes as signals on a Queen's County mountain, and had I not recognised them by the detail of the pre-arranged number of repetitions I could not have detected that they were artificial. Time was then given for the reading of orders and their explanation by group leaders, and here came in a high test of intelligence, for it is difficult for anyone to be suddenly dumped down in a strange country and be asked to grasp a scheme rapidly.

Each competitor received a small but excellent map and a printed copy of the orders to scouts which started with a reproduction in miniature of Moore's mountain march with his infantry, and Hope's détour with cavalry and guns, in the advance from Lisbon in 1808; for the scouts were told that while the Irish infantry would move due East over the mountains, the cavalry and guns could not do so and would have to follow a passable road leading North to Kinnahalla, and then swinging round South by East join hands with the infantry columns at a point indicated.

Our Salamanca lay well hidden in the mountains, and here an officer was placed to watch the time of the arrival of the groups, to

note their bivouac arrangements, to observe whether fires were lit, and if so if they were properly hidden, to see what ground was selected for repose and whether proper watch was kept, while he had also during the earlier part of the day constructed with ashes, bread-crusts, paper, corks and cartridges a dummy bivouac supposed to have been in use by a patrol of the enemy a few nights previously.

These orders necessitated the dividing of each group into two parties, *i.e.* two scouts to reconnoitre and report upon the cavalry and artillery line of advance, and two to carry out the reconnaissance of the mountains where we knew were bog paths and sheep tracks suitable to infantry, and as these groups had all been trained to work together, the task of operating in totally different directions—one lot five miles over mountains, the other seven and a half miles along a valley—and of joining hands as night was falling was undoubtedly a difficult one.

Arrived at this point of rendezvous in the mountains the groups were to bivouac and rest, and early the following morning were to make rough maps and sketches of the immediately surrounding country, with limit of time one hour, the officer at the point to indicate the section of country to be sketched, the group leader allotting the different tasks to his individual scouts.

On completion of this work once again the groups were to be split, one lot to follow up a line proposed as a general line of advance for the entire force direct upon Shimna River Valley, the other to examine the country more to the South in case retreat became necessary, the groups having to rendezvous again that afternoon at the summit of Slieve Donard, 2,796 feet high, not later than a named hour. On arriving there they were to search with their glasses and telescopes for any sign of the invader's troops which were known to be not more than six miles North, and had to hand over the result of their reconnaissance to messengers who had been sent ahead to this point. These messengers were awaiting them in hiding in St. Donard's cairn with orders to return at once so that the King of Ireland might thus obtain the result of the reconnaissance at the earliest possible moment.

What else took place there will be told in due course. In addition to the dummy bivouac we had sent a hack car with rubber-tyred wheels over the bed of a small stream and up a bog road and taken every step possible to stimulate the detective capacity of the scouts, their orders indicating that parties of the enemy were on foot in many directions, which was not really the case,

but the troops quartered in the area being those from which the competitors were drawn it was impossible to bring them into actual touch. However, the pious fraud succeeded well and resulted in one very pretty incident from the professional point of view, which I will presently relate.

Maps were then set by the different groups, and after this portion of the work had been carefully checked over as regards compass variation, &c., and marks allotted for rapidity and correctness, a few final words of instruction and advice were given. It was pointed out that as the crow flies the entire distance was eleven miles, but that on account of the broken nature of the ground the actual journey was considerably longer, and that the limit of time including both the sketching and mapping work at the Salamanca point of junction and the period of rest was twenty-two hours. Finally each group was conspicuously badged by means of broad white bands, one lot on right arm, one on left, one on both arms, one on caps, and the word to move off was given.

It might be thought that the various parties would have hung together, but not a bit of it, for in every case the split sections of the groups seemed to have quickly decided on their own respective lines and to have acted accordingly, the group which won the contest showing at the very outset a marked superiority in every detail.

Everything appeared so real and genuine that the scene left a lasting impression upon the memory, for one felt as though the whole safety of an army, a nation, and a cause, the whole success of a strategy temporarily subordinate but capable of developing into the dominant, depended upon this small band of picked men, to whom had been confided a task full to the brim of responsibility and of risk, taxing nerve and intelligence to the utmost, and utterly devoid of that glamour which marks many acts far less important and useful than the unseen invaluable work of the scout—the detective lynx without whom the ablest staff cannot pierce the brain-paralysing fog of war nor the bravest army put its courage to the most fruitful use. Far into the summer night we watched them, here a figure was seen carefully examining the ground, there another motionless behind a boulder lay hurriedly noting the possible lines of advance, then a double sheep's bleat would sound, shortly answered by another, and simultaneously two patches of khaki stealthily pressed forward round the spur of a hill.

We followed and noted points for the marking-sheet, and then when the area was entered within which their work came under

the observation of the officer previously placed in an advanced position, we returned to a pre-arranged rendezvous and made our way to our night's resting-place.

Starting shortly after dawn the following morning by motor and travelling round the coast to Newcastle, we reached it at an early hour, immediately ascended Slieve Donard and gained the summit long before the time at which we might expect to detect any advance upon the part of our scouts.

The view from the top is superb. Sea and mountain, heather and fertile plain, richly wooded demesne and white-walled farmhouse constitute a picture so rich and varied, so suggestive of the bounty of Providence, the art of nature, and the industry of man, that the eye dwells upon it with a feeling of grateful delight. Away seaward we could plainly discern the outline of the Isle of Man, the home of the imaginary invader; northward De Courcy's Castle at Dundrum called forth fresh memories of the Anglo-Norman soldier; the white specks of canvas at Ballykinler served to emphasise the busy nature of a modern training season, while now and again the faint wind-borne sound of the rifles at work on the ranges in that camp invested the situation with the reality of some distant skirmish.

But there was little time to spare for such reflections, for on arriving at this point the scouts were to be put through a practical examination, ground for making a cast had to be laid out, hilltops for distance judging to be scaled on the special maps of the umpires, plateaux, saddles and spurs to be selected for technical description by the scouts, distant objects chosen for identification, and many other details to be settled so that the final test in professional knowledge should be of the most thorough kind. We had arranged to hold this examination at the finish, in order that those who through bad map-reading, careless use of compass or want of endurance failed to reach the selected point, should suffer in marks to the fullest extent, for it is obvious that no amount of technical knowledge is of value unless the scout can stand the physical strain and find his way.

Shortly after one o'clock two small figures came creeping along the fold of ground which leads from the Shimna River Valley—they were two of the Connaught Ranger group—twenty minutes afterwards we picked up with the glasses two more coming from the other side of the range by the Chimney Rock Mountain—they were the remaining two Connaught Rangers. So accurate had been their map and compass work that a straight line drawn from North

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to South united them. They met on the summit not long after two o'clock, sunburnt, dirty, and weary of eyelid, for the test was severe to a degree, but keen of eye and showing a pride in their work which it was a treat to witness. An American critic has said that the town-bred soldier is in the long run the most enduring of the various military types because in the hard struggle for life in the city he represents the survival of the fittest. It is worthy of note that the first to finish the task on this occasion was a young town-bred soldier recruited in Belfast, and he showed less fatigue than any of the competitors.

At the top of Slieve Donard is a large cairn and beneath it local tradition declares the saintly Donard (who was ever fond of solitude) lies buried; quite close is a well named St. Donard's Well.

Under the shelter of this cairn the examination of all those who actually reached the finish was conducted, and all reports, maps and sketches were collected, but of the whole lot that started a bare half completed the course, fatigue, mis-reading of orders and careless following of the map accounting for the rest. Yet from those that did turn up in our somewhat original and roofless examination hall we obtained all the information that the commander at Kilbroney River might possibly require and much more than we expected; in fact if only one-third of those who started had arrived we should have had ample reports to go upon. Instruction was thus provided for ourselves, for as one of our number pointed out, we had unwittingly proved the wisdom of Berthier's habit of always dispatching four messengers when most men thought one would do, a practice that Soult to his detriment was prone to disregard. The written reports were extremely good, the rough sketching (by the private soldier, remember) would have been of much value to any commander, one sketch in particular being almost good enough for the illustration of a book, the verbal reports were clear and of a most intelligent type. I have mentioned that the instructions which we gave to the scouts resulted in one very pretty piece of work. It was as follows: Company marches were being carried out in the district—that is, companies were manœuvring for a specified period of several days under their commanders complete as small columns and making all arrangements for feeding, camping, &c., in the country through which they passed, and during the course of our competition a company from a neighbouring camp was traversing unknown to us the Shimna River Valley. A Connaught Ranger scout detected it in

the distance, made his way to an overhanging spur, successfully concealed himself so that he was able to observe everything, and brought in the most detailed information as regards strength, rank, number, and apparent age of officers, numbers of non-commissioned officers and of men, type and capacity of transport, in fact he left nothing unreported. Questioned as regards the dummy bivouac, all were reticent, and at first it seemed as if none had noticed it, although the officer at our Salamanca had observed the scouts standing over it. Though very carefully constructed it apparently had not been deemed genuine by them, they looked upon it as a trap to test their capacity to tell the true from the false and so rather disregarded it, and for that reason those whom we questioned seemed to adopt the attitude that they were not going to give themselves away. At last one soldier said to me: 'I could not find any evidence of any of the enemy's patrols having passed through the mountains.' 'Did you find nothing?' I asked. Then the keen power of observation showed itself. 'Oh, yes,' he replied. 'As I crossed Shanky's River by the small footbridge last evening, I noticed the marks of rubber-tyred wheels in the bed of the stream, and, knowing that the road is only used by carts going to the bog, I drew Sergeant Gallivan's attention to the tracks, so we went back again and found the wheelmarks on the road with horse-prints going both directions, and we then proceeded again towards the bog and found the tracks went up to the hilltop, where they stopped and turned round, though it was hard to trace them because the road was dry. Again returning to the stream we found the tracks were double, and we made up our minds that it was a hack car that had gone out and returned. Then we met an old woman and she told me a car had been there with an officer, and that he had dropped something, which I looked for and found; it was an empty cart-ridge-case. I found no real evidence of any patrol of an enemy.' A good deal of the true scout in that nature.

This conversation was barely concluded when the officer in observation in the hills during the night arrived, and from him we learnt that the groups had met fairly well the night before, but that there were some serious defects of knowledge to note, for one group of four had lain down to rest in a sandpit without setting a watch of any kind, and on starting again had taken a wrong bearing, and gone due North, an error repeated by other individual scouts, while others had been unable to continue the strain and were making direct for Newcastle. We then turned to the final test of

the competition, the use of field-glasses and telescopes, of which we had a goodly number of the best type, and for this trial of skill we had placed under orders unknown to any of the competitors, at points about five miles off, small bodies of troops in conspicuous places supposed to represent the enemy's outposts, and although the evening was very bright and clear, yet it was quite impossible to 'pick up' a single soldier, in spite of the fact that we as judges were aware of their dispositions. Looking at Slieve Donard from the ground where these picquets and sentries were posted, it is perfectly easy with strong glasses to discern people moving on the summit, yet when the position was reversed we could read nothing at all, the angle of downward sight being so steep as to obliterate everything except the bold features of the country side.

After allowing reasonable law for stragglers to come in, we commenced to descend, leaving in a conspicuous place on top of St. Donard's cairn an empty bottle (yes, quite right, it had been full) containing a message to the effect that all parties had left the mountain. The emptying of that bottle was very refreshing to all of us, while the scouts showed a keen appreciation of a very necessary stimulant, nor did they exhibit any desire to enter into a controversy as to whether seven-year-old or ten-year-old is the best.

At the station we met a party of officers keenly interested in the contest, some indeed had been up country a bit to observe, and all warmly congratulated the winners (the Connaught Rangers group),¹ who had certainly given a fine exhibition of training, grit, and keen intelligence.

Telegraphic inquiries were set on foot and all the missing were reported safe by the following morning. At the beginning we had had misgivings as to the practicability of some details of the contest; at the close we realised that severe though the conditions had been it had been full of interest, revealing an unexpected degree of intelligence in the competitors, and one could not look at the grimy travel-stained scouts without feeling a glow of pleasure in the contemplation of the British soldier still as ever *primus inter pares*.

Nor had they been competitors only, for we who had had to devise the scheme had also derived considerable instruction from their work, the story of which I trust may prove as attractive to read, as the work it describes was a genuine treat to witness.

EDWARD MACARTNEY-FILGATE.

¹ A special prize for the best individual work was awarded to Sergeant Andrews, 2nd West Yorkshire Regiment.

TEXAS JACK AND THE BOTTICELLIS.

It was long ago in Florence that I met him, when I was but a lad of twenty-one—so long ago that it seems safe to talk about him. His name was not Texas Jack; he may never have seen Texas. Except for the mere fact that he was an American, I do not know where he came from, nor do I know whither he has gone, and it is only a single episode in his life that I am going to tell. The name that he wrote in the pension register was James C. Bunton, but I have no reason to think that it was his own, for he was emphatically a gentleman with a past. We called him Texas Jack because of his huge, raw-boned figure, because of two significant scars upon his face, and an air of bravado constantly breaking through an intentionally quiet way he had of doing things. His manner was that of a man who remembered that, among the civilised, he must not forget to be peaceable, and the white, volcanic repose of his face always suggested a pause between fury past and fury to come. He looked about forty-five, but whether old in years or old in sin nobody could tell.

At table the little band of young artists to which I belonged found endless fascination in watching Texas Jack. There was a laboured carefulness both about his use of the fork and about his English; and the occasional uncertainty in the management of his knife in cutting meat hinted other purposes to which it might be put. He spoke in the gentlest voice, yet, to us, in the gleeful exaggeration of youth, it always suggested pistol shots, and his right hand never made a quick motion without causing me to jump a bit; was it feeling for something in his hip pocket? Sometimes I wished that we had gone to some other pension. Those great sinewy hands could have wrung any neck at the table, and more than once I found myself wondering whether I should show presence of mind in extreme danger. I had an idea that I could tell better if I knew beforehand what the danger was to be.

Of Mrs. James C. Bunton we saw little, for she was indisposed much of the time, and had meals sent to her room. When she did appear, a frightened-looking woman with appealing blue eyes and fading brown hair, we greatly admired Texas Jack's chivalry in

looking after her, though we wondered at his air of triumph in so doing. It was totally disproportionate to her outward charm, at least. With the gentlest possible hands he would adjust her wrap or help her downstairs, yet his face at these moments wore an almost savage look of delight in possession, as if he were proud that the chiefest among his goods and chattels was a human being. That he was wealthy, her clothing and jewels—neither in very good taste, and both at variance with a certain delicacy in outline in the wearer—proved abundantly. Why they had come to so modest a pension was cause for wonder, until we realised that Mr. Bunton had yielded to her timid desire to stop in a quiet place. That he cared about her was evident in many ways, but we were all puzzled by her attitude toward him. Sometimes she seemed to cling to him in confidence, but oftener the look of fear in her blue eyes suggested that many moments of her married life were as crises in a melodrama.

One morning I walked to the Uffizi Gallery, to work on my copy of Raphael's portrait of himself, for I was not yet launched on my career, and was content to do copying for bread and butter. It was one of those dull days of cloud which come even to Florence, so blurring outlines and defacing colours that entry into this charmed spot, with its relief of exquisite lines and subtle shades, seemed like admission to a world more fully created than that without. I was thinking, a bit complacently, of this refuge of finer appreciation known only to artist souls, when my eyes met an astounding sight. There, standing before Botticelli's wistful 'Madonna of the Pomegranate,' stood Texas Jack, completely absorbed, his body limp, but something within him which I had never seen before, alert and quickening. That face which had been a grindstone for men's swords softened curiously, crumbled, if I may use the term, breaking into gentler lines. It was plainly his first glimpse of a Botticelli—for aught I know it may have been his first glimpse of any picture save chromos—and its appealing pathos had clearly overwhelmed him. I saw him tiptoe nearer, and, with a huge forefinger that did not quite touch the canvas, follow the outline of the mother's arm as it curves round the child. Forgetting that I reached only to his shoulder, I tried to put myself between him and the approaching guard, when he turned and faced me.

'You ever seen this before?' he asked with a deep-drawn breath.

'Yes.'

'You never said anything about it.' The words came as an accusation, and I realised that I had no excuse to offer.

'I never seen anything like it, never,' said Texas Jack slowly, emotion leading him back beyond his newly-acquired grammar to primal depths. 'It's damned queer,' he went on. 'I've seen women holdin' their kids that way, but I never sensed what it meant.'

It was the only real instance I have ever seen of the miracle-working power of art fulfilling its original intention, and then, as on succeeding days, Texas Jack often caused me to forget the colours on my palette, as he made discovery after discovery in the Uffizi. He always returned to my painting stool to tell me what he had seen, and, from all lesser discoveries, he invariably came back to his Botticelli 'Madonna,' claiming, to use his own words, that it was 'a blank sight better than any of the rest of 'em.'

The air brightened after this, both the inner and the outer air, it seemed to me. Day after day, spring sunshine and the glory of the city's past lingered in the air as a crumbling fine gold dust, and daffodil and hyacinth bloomed out against the dull stones of the old palaces. I saw Mr. and Mrs. James C. Bunton everywhere, driving up green heights toward Fiesole, or wandering past the worn and expressive corners of the Florentine streets. The subdued and terrified look of the woman began to disappear; her hair grew brighter, whether from Nature or Art we could not say, and it did not matter—either indicated hope. The very way in which she clung to her husband's arm in the crowded street showed lessening fear. The change in him affected her as sunshine did the growing flowers; we felt it ourselves, and gradually lost our wary way of approaching Texas Jack as if he were some high explosive. Doubtless we were all softened by the magic of the land, and by the gracious ways of this Italian folk, whose long civilisation, in numberless imperceptible ways, constantly touches the souls of alien folk to finer issues.

Yes; spring had come to us all, even to this faded woman whom we were so deeply interested in watching, but it was the flowers on the bonnets in shop windows that appealed to her, not wild anemone and crocus from the fields beyond the gates. As her face grew happier, her garments became more trying, villainous purple and magenta blending in impossible combinations there. Curiously

enough, though I saw husband and wife together almost everywhere, I never saw them in the gallery, which the man haunted so much alone. Never, that is, but once. Texas Jack took Mrs. Bunton to see his pet Botticelli, and tiptoed to it from the threshold, as was his wont. She stood dazed, helpless, even frightened, not knowing what to say, while the man's expectant eyes watched.

'I can't say I like the way she does her hair,' said Mrs. Bunton with a nervous little laugh; her own was done high that day under a flame-coloured hat. When her attention had been drawn by a Paris gown worn by one of the sightseers the man turned to me.

'She can't see it,' he muttered blankly. 'It's mighty queer; now *you* can!'

It was I who became the confidant of his new enthusiasm, and who was consulted at every point about the collection of Botticellis that he was starting. Reproductions of all the artist had done he would have, asserted Mr. James C. Bunton, and money, combined with persistence, brought into his hands the most complete representation of the master's work that I have ever seen: photographs, engravings, a copy in oil of the beautiful 'Madonna', of the Corsini gallery, copies of the graceful figures in the Sistine Chapel, and of the frescoed fragment at Paris. Wherever a slender, dancing foot or a bit of fluttering drapery bearing the artist's touch was to be found on a crumbling wall, the agent of Mr. Bunton was sure to be, setting deft hands at work to reproduce it. Our wild friend's collection was as choice as if amassed by one whose lifework had been art appreciation, and his comments, though unconventional, were those of one to whom the very soul of the master had been laid bare. I was grateful that he did not talk with many people about his enthusiasm, for it seemed to me that he would not at any time have hesitated to prove by a pistol shot the superiority of Botticelli to Raphael.

While I was busy watching the growth of this collection, watching, too, the coming of emotion to Texas Jack's bleak face, suggestive of the growth of green things over the ruins of an earthquake, watching something like gaiety creep into Mrs. Bunton's wide blue eyes, as pink colour, undoubtedly real, came into her cheeks, the man suddenly asked me to copy his 'Madonna of the Pomegranate' for him. With a sense as of honour conferred upon me I accepted, and my pleasure in the commission was not due to the fabulous sum offered me. There was deeper interest in

it than in any task I had undertaken, and also a sense of risk. Would my employer use the bowie knife on me if the work were not done to his satisfaction?

The lads had great sport with me in those days: Texas Jack had taken a fancy to me—there was no denying it. They called me *The Desperado's Darling* and *The Ruffian's Pet*, pretended to be afraid of being left alone with me, and searched me for concealed weapons. They jeered at me as a lion-tamer, and talked of getting up a syndicate to promote me and my wild man. When I told them I had given up my projected picture, 'The Cave Dweller,' for which I had hoped my new friend would sit, and had decided to ask him to pose as one of the three worshipping kings in a Nativity study, they hooted gleefully; yet, under all the chaff about the beneficent working of art on the savage mind, I was conscious that they were little less tensely interested than I in the transformation that was going on.

Texas Jack became my daily companion, at least for several hours, though he never let his career as art critic interfere with his scrupulous attendance on his wife in a drive through the Cascine or up San Miniato. I grew used to the scrutiny of those large gray eyes, which never, even as they softened and grew luminous, lost their bloodshot look. If I was nervous I trust I did not show it, though sometimes the casual use of the word aim made me jump a bit, even when it referred to art and not to the revolver. Texas Jack was very stern about my work, and more than once that stiff forefinger, curiously scarred, pointed out a delicate line of throat or forehead that I had failed to get. Sometimes, after standing lost in thought before the original, he muttered: 'Just like the real thing, only more so, more so.'

It was through a bit of his art criticism, drawn forth by a mistaken remark of my own, that I was privileged to hear something of his early history. I had said in my foolishness, vexed probably by my inability to get the delicate blues and faded rose tints of the original, that Botticelli was not a great colourist. The bloodshot look in Texas Jack's eyes deepened alarmingly, and I wondered if he would give me time to say a prayer.

'I reckon he was colourist enough to say what he wanted to say,' remarked my employer, with a gleam of fighting teeth. I lamely suggested that perhaps it was I who failed in being a colourist, but Mr. Bunton did not hear, for his thoughts had gone drifting backward over the stormy seas of his past life. He

shook his fist gently and approvingly at the 'Madonna' and her great creator.

'I tell you there's a man that got where he started for! So did I, but it wasn't quite the same.'

I waited, for the tone hinted confidences, and I wondered if he referred to successful mining ventures. He turned to me suddenly, demanding:

'Did you ever kill a man?'

Almost apologetically I admitted that I had not. Circumstances, I murmured feebly, had not offered. I did not ask him if he had done so, for inquiry seemed unnecessary; I only worked on.

'Well, I have,' he vouchsafed finally, 'and it was what more than anything else I'd set out to do. It made me feel *good*, as if I had nothin' left to ask for, the way that fellow there,' pointing with his thumb to Botticelli, 'must a felt when he got some of his things done.' I went on busily, touching with gold the falling tresses of the angel's hair.

'I had to wait several years to get him, but I just bided my time, and I knew nothin' short o' death could stop me. You see, he'd done me the meanest trick, the low down cussedest trick that one man could do another.' The polite tourist vocabulary which he usually managed with such conscientiousness seemed slipping from him. 'Shootin' was too good for him,' said Texas Jack, regretfully, 'but I just personally surrounded his ranch when the time came and shot him up. 'Twas fair fight, for he had plenty time to get gone, or to get ready and sass back. He stayed and sassed back; I did for him, and I got back what he'd took away from me.' He stopped, watching my none too skilful brush as it rendered the halo hovering above the head of the Christ child.

'Maybe I oughtn't to done it,' he stated inquiringly after a pause. I parried, for his brow wore a threatening look. After all, virtue is relative, and life was sweet to one-and-twenty in the fragrant Florentine spring.

'Circumstances alter cases,' I remarked sagely. He drew a sigh of relief.

'I'm glad to have you say so,' he responded heartily, insisting that I should stop and shake hands with him. 'I couldn't be sorry for that if I tried.'

Even this expression of satisfaction in sin—the word seems as inapplicable to him as to an earthquake—did not lessen my impression of the gradual change in Texas Jack. He was mellowing.

That night I saw his wife come eagerly to meet him, slip her arm through his and carry him off to the corner of the salon to whisper something in his ear, and a minute later his loud haw-haw mingled with her merry laughter. She no longer laughed in the shrill, obligatory fashion of the early days; she no longer jumped in a startled way when her husband spoke, and it seemed to me that his air of triumph in looking at her was changing to a look of wistful concern. While I am talking of changes in others, I may as well confess the change that came over me at this time. As I look back I can see how much this unrepentant homicide, innocent of all training, had to do with determining my ideas of art. At a moment when, fresh from Paris, I was absorbed in questions of technique, thinking that line and shade were all, this man, through the great change wrought upon him by the work of an old master, made me realise once for all that the mission of art is to speak.

One by one the perfect days drifted on, while sunshine poured into the valley, and misty blue lay in the hollows of the encompassing hills beyond the soft wooded slopes. One afternoon I saw Texas Jack bring in from the green fields beyond San Miniato blood-red tulips that grew wild there, and lay them in his wife's hands. She was greatly pleased and showed it, saying that, if they were only artificial, she could wear them in the Leghorn straw hat she had that day bought in the open market, and the man seemed content with the reply. Meanwhile, he did not relax his scrutiny of my work, and, after his confession, his manner always wore a confidential air. I saw that he had more to tell, and so asked him nothing, while by hints and signs he slowly led up to the point. It was a day when I was busy with the Madonna's hand, which lovingly supports the Christ child, and I felt that I had failed to get the tenderness of her touch. My critic looked on long and silently, and when I turned toward him I saw that his eyes were dim with what I did not dare name tears.

'You remember what I told you the other day?' he asked. I nodded; holding the brush in my teeth, I could not well speak.

'There was one thing I didn't tell,' he added huskily. 'While I was shootin' up that ranch there was—an accident.'

I looked at him sympathetically, for something in his voice touched me to the quick.

'Jest as I was good and ready, that skulkin' varmint I was layin' for flung the window open, and I fired. 'Twas too late to see, but his wife was settin' there holdin' her baby up to her just

like that.' He pointed toward the picture. 'It—it struck the kid,' said Texas Jack. I turned in haste to my canvas, for his face was working curiously and I knew that he did not want me to see.

'I didn't just like it,' he continued, 'hadn't never been used to fightin' kids, but I didn't think much about it: I was too busy gettin' the man, and I *got* him,' he added in triumph.

I nodded knowingly; at that moment this seemed to be legitimate cause for congratulation.

'I ain't never been sorry about that for a minute, but I'm beginning to be sorry about the kid, and about her. If you'll believe it, she never once stirred, and when I'd got my job done, there she was settin' and holdin' the little thing same way she was doin' when it was alive. I never dreamed what I'd done to her till I saw that,' and he jerked his thumb in the direction of the 'Madonna.' 'Someway that made me see how they must feel about 'em. This here "Madonna" now kind of looks as if hers had been killed already. It's very like, only there warn't any angels there, or if there was, I didn't see 'em,' he added grimly.

'Did you ever do anything,' I ventured, 'to try to atone?' A queer look came into his face.

'I thought I'd made it up to her handsome,' was his answer, 'but I'm beginnin' to think that mebbe I took the wrong way.'

March had drifted into April, and April into May, with many a soft golden sunset behind the dull green cypresses of San Miniato. Every day the light grew lovelier upon the olive slopes about this chosen city, and every day the gracious inner influence of the place became more apparent in the faces about me. My picture was done, and in my hand was a cheque, scandalously large, signed, with a great flourish, 'James C. Bunton.' In vain I protested that this was four times as much as I had ever received for any picture, and in vain I confessed that my copy was not good, the peculiar grace of this master being impossible to render. My objections were waved aside by the sweep of a large, diamond-ringed white hand, which came down in a hard, affectionate blow upon my shoulder.

'Jest take my advice, young friend. Your dooty ain't—isn't to talk about that cheque, but to cash it and spend it. You ought to have more confidence in the judgment of your elders.'

No confidence at all did I have in Texas Jack's judgment, but I had learned to have a great deal in his heart, and it was with a

real pang that I listened when he told me gloomily one day that he was going home to America.

'Tired of Florence?' he responded, in answer to my comment. 'No, but I've got a job out West needs fixin' up, and I'll be sailin in a few days.'

'And Mrs. Bunton?' I asked. He looked at me darkly; the white collectedness of his lips made me wonder what storm was going on inside.

'I don't jest know yet what she cal'lates to do.'

To-day I am ashamed of some of the ideas that came at this moment into my mind about Mr. James C. Bunton. Was he tired of his wife? Perhaps, after all, she was not his wife, and he was getting ready to cast her off. The glory of the spring air was dimmed and tarnished by my forebodings.

A few days later I was upon San Miniato, resting in the late afternoon, sitting lazily upon a sunny bench, opening my eyes and then shutting them again, and trying to decide at which moment the beauty before me was more vivid—Florence with her dull red roofs and delicate marbles of Duomo and Campanile seen between slim cypress trees. Suddenly I was startled by a familiar voice; the bench on the other side of the ilex hedge was occupied.

'You are going away?' asked Mrs. James C. Bunton, all the shrill anxiety of earlier days sounding again in her voice.

'Yes, I'm goin'. I've got passage out on the "Campania" for the sixteenth.'

'Am I going, too?' I held my breath, waiting for the answer.

'No, you better stay right here. You like it here, I reckon, better than any place I've seen you in.'

'That's so,' assented Mrs. Bunton. 'Is something wrong you've got to see about?'

'Yes, something's wrong.'

'And you want me to stay until you come back?'

'I ain't comin' back.'

'You—ain't—comin'—back?' There were not enough notes in the woman's voice to express her feeling. Behind the green hedge I raged in hot disgust at my own sex; apparently my worst suspicions were true.

'Rachel,' the man's voice was broken and ashamed, 'Rachel, I done you wrong; I see it now, and I'm going to set it right.'

The significance of the story about the woman and the child flashed over me. Astonishment at the identity of Mrs. James C.

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Bunton kept me rooted to my seat. What glamour of imagination in the man, or what dignity of grieving motherhood could have lent for a moment to this commonplace woman the look of our glorified Madonna? Wondering at this, I almost forgot that I ought not to be there, but I could not move without disturbing the speakers, and it seemed to me that interruption might cause great harm.

'I didn't do right by you and the kid,' said Texas Jack huskily. 'I ain't sorry for what I done to *him*, not a mite. He was a mean rascal, and killin' was too good for him, if he was your husband.'

I covered my ears with my hands, and the murmuring answer of the woman's voice I did not hear. The man's loud tones, however, could not be shut out.

'If he'd a won you honest away from me in the first place I'd a said nothin', but he done me a mean trick. He lied outrageous about you; you've always known that, ain't you?' No answer was audible. 'Well, I fixed him, and I'm glad of it, but I've been thinkin' about that kid. Funny I should get to puzzlin' about a little thing like that. I s'pose now you thought considerable of it?'

'Oh, Jim!' cried the woman, as if a sharp instrument had suddenly touched a tender spot.

'Well, Rachel, I'm goin' to undo what I can, for I done wrong. I didn't give you no choice, and I see now I oughtn't a carried you off and married you within a week after I shot him. I s'pose it's customary to wait. Now I'm goin' back West where it's easy to get a divorce. If I can manage, I'll apply for it in your name on the ground that I've deserted you; while I'm out there it will be desertion, see? Anyhow, I'll get it, and I'll fix you up fine. You can swell round here with the best of 'em. Two-thirds of what I've got you shall have, and that means hundreds, thousands, where he wouldn't a given you as many cents. But I can't make it up about the kid.'

I heard heavy heels crunching the gravel; then came a shrill little cry.

'Oh, Jim!' pleaded the woman; 'don't go off like that. I've grown real fond of you. Lately it's been different, somehow.'

'If you was free at this minute, and I asked you to marry me, which I didn't never do,' he demanded with fierce tenderness, 'what would you say?'

I held my breath until the answer came.

'I'd say yes, Jim dear.'

MARGARET SHERWOOD.

ROBERT BROWNING IN EDINBURGH.

A HUNDRED years since Robert Burns had paid his first famous visit to the Capital, had 'sheltered in its honoured shade,' had been received with enthusiasm by its most intellectual society, fêted and lionised, listened to and wondered at. That brilliant, memorable visit of Robert Burns to Edinburgh! . . .

A hundred years, and again 'Scotia's darling seat' welcomed a poet whom she delighted to honour, fêted and lionised him, listened to him in wonder. Again lights were flashed on, hands were outstretched, faces were lit with enthusiasm, memories were gathered. That brilliant, memorable visit of Robert Browning to Edinburgh! . . .

In the hundred years our Capital had no doubt changed somewhat, both in its aspect and its ways. Was Robert Browning invited to carouse in Dowie's tavern in Libberton's Wynd, or to forgather convivially with the 'Crochallan Fencibles' and hear Dawney Douglas sing 'Cro Chalien'? No. But then, again, did Robert Burns have an honorary degree conferred on him in the United Synod Hall in Castle Terrace? Certainly not.

Nor was Robert Browning persuaded to read his poems to any drawing-room gatherings—there was no time even to sign all the birthday books. But, if there were no such intently listening audience as the angelic Miss Burnet and the beautiful Duchess of Gordon, who had so bewildered the young dark-eyed rustic from Ayr, nevertheless the dear old dark-eyed, white-haired genius of a later century found himself one of a very congenial and worthy company in this hospitable town, its good measure of intellect pressed down and running over.

It was ostensibly for the very purpose of receiving the Edinburgh Honorary Degree that Robert Browning came amongst us. It was the Tercentenary of our great University; and Scotland's Capital had gathered then all the greatest celebrities of the age—gathered them from sunny France and ancient Italy, from philosophical Germany, from Austria, from Russia—from every country of Europe, and from Britain beyond the seas; soldiers, statesmen, divines, men of science, authors, thinkers, explorers—men whose

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names thrill the pulses; names that, then and now, mark the progress of the world. And among them was none greater than that of Robert Browning.

There seems to have been some delay in the Academic invitation's reaching him—though none in that from the friend who was to be his host—for he writes, in reply to the latter :

19 Warwick Crescent, W. Feb. 19. '84.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR MASSON,—I have not received the invitation to Edinburgh which occasions this particularly kind one which I thankfully acknowledge. I should find it difficult if not impossible to leave London in April, as my son will then be with me: but had I seen my way to so doing, it would delight me indeed could I spend the days in question with you and with Mrs. Masson. For the rest, depend on it—whenever—*if* ever—I am privileged to see the as famous as beautiful City again, I shall call on you—the first thing of all. Pray thank Mrs. Masson for associating her goodness with your own: and believe me ever, my dear Professor Masson,

Yours gratefully,
ROBERT BROWNING.

And again three days later, a letter having been sent suggesting that his son should come also, his answer says :

19 Warwick Crescent, W. Feb. 22. '84.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR MASSON,—Up to this moment (3½ p.m.) I have received no such notice as you mention, nor consequently am apprised of the signal honour intended me except by your kindness: I was unaware of any inducement to visit Edinburgh but the quite sufficient one of your kindness. If there be no mistake, it becomes my duty, as well as pleasure, to obey the invitation from the University and from yourself, and I will gladly do so. Pray explain to whomever it may concern the cause of my silence in case—as seems not improbable from the terms of your letter—the official one has by some accident failed to reach me. Should it follow, I will acknowledge the distinction as gratefully as I have done already when it was conferred by Oxford and Cambridge.

So, my dear Professor Masson, I provisionally accept with thankfulness your hospitality and that of Mrs. Masson. For my son, who is away, I can only say that he shall be informed of your goodness and, I fully believe, will be delighted to avail himself of it. More of this anon, however: my immediate object being to say that I am as yet in ignorance of the University's intention to offer me a Degree.

Pray believe me, Dear Professor Masson,
Yours very sincerely,
ROBERT BROWNING.

This letter is followed in four days by this :

19 Warwick Crescent, W. Feb. 26. '84.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,—I only received the Official Invitation last evening at the Club, although I had enquired, two days before, whether such a letter might not have been addressed to it. As to the 'vagueness or intelligibility' of your own note, I can assure you that one thing was intelligible enough,—that you wished to help me most kindly and pleasantly to witness an extremely interesting

ceremony. I doubted, for the reasons I gave,—and some others ungiven,—whether I ought to so far indulge myself : of course, the honour proposed to me admitted of no appearance of a refusal,—and I did a mere duty while gratifying myself besides. I have written to my son, and await his answer—which you shall hear as soon as possible : and when the time comes I shall trust to your goodness to inform me of all necessary to be known as to the time of arrival. Meanwhile and always believe me, my dear Professor,

Yours most truly,

ROBERT BROWNING.

By the way,—ought I to attend in the Oxford D.C.L. gown,—at any preliminary entertainment, for instance ?

The following letter of a month later is evidently in reply to one asking him to time his arrival two days before the graduation ceremonial, as, on the day previous to the ceremonial, a reception was to be given by his hostess to meet him ; and to keep other days free for other engagements at our house and elsewhere :

19 Warwick Crescent, W. March 25, '84.
MY DEAR PROFESSOR MASSON,—Nothing can be kinder than all your proposed arrangements. My son arrived two days ago and, unfortunately, is obliged to return next week to Paris in order to finish work begun there,—and he will be detained too long to allow of the visit he would otherwise delight in paying you,—and for the invitation to which he desires me to offer you—and offer Mrs. Masson—his grateful acknowledgments,—being well aware of what a privilege he is forced to deprive himself. With respect to the evening of the 15th,—be assured that all my time is wholly at your disposal, and would have been so independently of your kind intimation. As for the arrival, it will be, as you advise, on Monday 14th, by help of the train from King's Cross. I shall bring the Oxford D.C.L. gown, and provide myself with a Hood in Edinburgh.

So, with repeated thanks for all your goodness,—and looking forward to much pleasure in the approaching festivities, and, even more, in the opportunity of converse,—believe me, dear Professor Masson,

Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT BROWNING.

He arrived, then, on Monday evening, April 14. And he *did* come from King's Cross—it must have been the Waverley Station he arrived at, for when, attracted by the rattle of wheels, for which no doubt we had been listening, along the stony emptiness of Great King Street, some of us peeped from an upper window, it was to see the cab draw up from the east, and the great unknown and his host descend from it.

There were no guests that first evening—it was the only quiet evening of the visit—and Mr. Browning sat opposite the fire in an elbow chair, his hands resting on the wooden arms, talking brilliantly and happily to his hostess and host and those members of the family privileged to be present and listen.

He spoke with sympathetic pride of his son and his son's work,

and he told how once the son, who studied so much abroad, had told Millais he was thinking of going to Egypt to paint, and Millais had replied that *he* would not give up his months in the Highlands of Scotland for any years in Egypt. Mr. Browning's host and hostess were both well able to picture the optimistic smile with which Millais would have said it.

It was that first evening, as he sat in that chair, that Mr. Browning told the story of his experience at Oxford when he had gone there to receive the Oxford honorary degree. There was, he said, a disturbance in the Sheldonian because of a student's dangling, on a string stretched from gallery to gallery across the area of the hall, a red cotton nightcap, 'in allusion to a little thing I once wrote,' Mr. Browning explained in a parenthesis. Next day, Mr. Browning learnt that the irreverential undergraduate was to be 'sent down.' He immediately called personally on the outraged academic authorities and appealed for justice to be tempered with mercy. But they were obdurate. It did not seem to occur to them that it was in any way a credit to Oxford University that one of its students should know at least the name of a poem by Browning; the method of exhibiting the knowledge naturally scandalised them. Discipline must be maintained. 'At last,' narrated Mr. Browning, 'I went to the Vice-Chancellor himself. "Mr. Vice-Chancellor," I said, "am I, or am I not, a member of your University?" "Certainly you are one, Mr. Browning." "Then let that poor boy off!" And he *was* let off!'

Where, one wonders, is now that joyous perpetrator of unseasonable jokes? How have the intervening twenty and odd years been spent? Is he a member of many Browning societies?

As the night waxed late while Mr. Browning and his hosts chatted, all the members of the family cannot claim to have been present. The chair, however—subsequent feeling having induced the surreptitious engraving and attachment of a brass plate bearing the name and date—has become thereby indisputable individual property, and is now and for ever 'The Browning Chair.'

Next day a great afternoon gathering at our house gave Edinburgh the opportunity of meeting our three guests, Mr. Browning, and Count and Countess Saffi—Aurelio Saffi, one of the Italian triumvirate,

Whose hand had borne such part
In so sublime and strange vicissitude
As then filled all faint hearts with hope renewed
To think upon, and triumph—

Count Saffi and his graceful, fascinating Scottish wife, more foreign in her accent, after her long years in Italy, than was her husband.

It may have been a crush that reception; it is recorded that the guests were numbered in hundreds, and certainly the cubic feet of the rooms were not; but it is comforting to know that Mr. Browning was not crushed—there *must* have been a space round him to have allowed that gentle lady to stroke him so eloquently. She stood behind him and put out her hand timidly and drew it back, and then, gathering courage, reverently mesmerised his coat with the tips of her gloved fingers. Her fingers were doubtless 'light as a snowflake'; but Mr. Browning evidently became aware of them, for he glanced quickly and nervously over his shoulder. Then she withdrew her hand in confusion; but, 'biding her time,' when his attention was again safely occupied she again put forth the hand, gazing rapturously round her for sympathy as she resumed her stroking. Did she expect him to purr? One hopes now that somebody passed by who could and did exalt so humble a worshipper by introducing to her the great and kindly poet.

There was another worshipper who had sent the previous day a wealth of pear-blossom from her beautiful and historic old garden near Edinburgh, with the request it should be put on Mr. Browning's toilet table. Attached to the bouquet was a quotation from one of Browning's poems. Possibly—but this is subsequent imagining—the lines were from 'Home Thoughts from Abroad':

Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—

'This,' said his hostess, in introducing her, 'is the sender of the pear-blossom.'

'I stripped a whole tree for you, Mr. Browning,' he was told. Mr. Browning took both her hands and looked at her kindly but reproachfully.

'Poor pear-tree!' he said.

One or two trivial impressionist pictures of that afternoon are very vivid. There was always a little clearing where the lion stood, and then, round about, the crowd was denser—no doubt, as one has so often seen on similar occasions since, composed of those who, with restless eyes and wandering attention, sustain half-hearted and disjointed conversations while keeping close on the

chance of seeing and hearing, or even perhaps of being presented and being heard.

One of the pictures is of Mr. Browning standing silent, facing and looking down upon a shorter man, who looked up at him and spoke eagerly and excitedly. Mr. Browning's expression was one of mild and benevolent kindness, with a hint of humour behind the smile. And the words of the shorter man, just as an irresponsible and insignificant passer-by overheard them, were: 'The best thing I ever wrote—'

Another picture is of the poet standing in the centre window, with a background of flowers, enjoying a gossip with Sir Andrew Clark.

At the end of the crush, when all the bidden company and the last of the lions had gone, when the hosts and hostesses had gathered their foreign guests and departed, when the floor, lately crowded with fair women and learned men, was once more empty, Mr. Browning's hostess turned to him with the suggestion that, if he were tired, there was time to rest before the arrival of the guests for the dinner party of the evening. No doubt she was tired herself, and longing for a little quiet space! Count and Countess Saffi must have already claimed it and gone upstairs, and probably the host was below speeding the parting guests, for Mr. Browning was alone with us. But Mr. Browning was in high spirits. 'Tired!' he exclaimed. 'Tired! Not a bit! Not a bit!'

He took the skirts of his coat daintily in his hands, and, pointing his toes in true dancing-master fashion, waltzed elegantly round the entire circumference of the room.

'There!' he cried, smiling triumphantly at us, 'now don't tell me I am tired!'

It must have been just then—unless it had been that morning—that the little dress rehearsal took place. The recollection is that the drawing-room door was opened and Countess Saffi anxiously led in her lord, arrayed in his Bologna academic robes, as he would be dressed for the graduation ceremonial next day. 'Did he do?' the graceful little Scottish lady asked in her pretty foreign accent. Do? It was magnificent! Remembered now, it appears as the most brilliant and gorgeous spot in the whole of the brilliant and gorgeous pageantry of the week. Perhaps the picture is exaggerated by the appreciative delight of the moment, and the long years since; but Count Saffi will ever stand, half dignified

and half shy, clad in the deep blues of his native skies, in rich reds and glowing purples, in furs and velvet and satin and gold and precious stones, like a king in a fairy story, with a crown, or even a mitre, on his head, and a sceptre in his hand, and certainly beautiful old point lace ruffles. Memory insists on the lace ruffles. What is the full academic dress of Bologna? It could easily be ascertained. But it would be a pity to break the stained-glass window.

And while everyone crowded about the splendid figure with exclamations of admiration, Mr. Browning slipped quietly out of the room, and presently reappeared in his Oxford D.C.L. robe, severe and plain scarlet. He looked round deprecatingly, and came forward. 'I have a robe, too!' he urged, with humorous pretence of envy. And there the scene fades.

It was at the breakfast-table that some of the less convivial of us saw most of him. He used to come down to breakfast wearing a short blue pilot coat, and with his white hair very damp and quite neat; but very soon all that soft white hair was rumpled up above his broad forehead and his glowing dark eyes.

It was at breakfast that he told us of his having been challenged, on the occasion of Lord Rosebery's marriage, to write four lines which should rhyme both names—that of the bride and that of the bridegroom. Browning was evidently—as is plain to any reader—very proud of his out-of-the-way rhymes, of his unique power of rhyming. He accepted the challenge; and he repeated the lines to us with good-natured glee in his success:

Venus, Sea-froth's child,
Playing old gooseberry,
Married Lord Rosebery
To Hannah de Rothschild.

But, if he was proud of his power of rhyming, he was well aware of his power of being a terrible mental exercise. He mentioned the number of Browning societies in existence—there are probably many more now—and told how he had gone as a guest to a meeting of one, and had sat, unrecognised and unnoticed, in the back-ground and listened humbly. A heated discussion had taken place on the meaning of some passage; and at last, as no one seemed satisfied, he had diffidently suggested a possible reading. But he had been unmercifully snubbed, and promptly given to understand he knew nothing about it.

It was after breakfast one morning, as he stood with a group

of men on the hearth-rug, that the conversation turned on the untruth of Romeo's rash assertion 'What's in a name!' Mr. Browning maintained that there was a great deal in a name, and that a person's name influenced his whole life and character and profession. And then, in an aside, 'I never should have written a line of poetry if I had been called Stubbs!'

It was at breakfast also, probably *à propos* of the cleverness of Post Office officials, that he told us of a letter addressed 'Robert Browning, Poet, England,' having reached him at once, with 'Try 19 Warwick Crescent' on it. It did not seem strange; the strangeness lies in the poet's extraordinary modesty in thinking it strange.

How prettily, and with what an air of amused worry, he told the tale of the deep offence he had given Mrs. Carlyle! It was just after his return from a long time spent in Italy, and he had gone to pay his respects to Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle. Mrs. Carlyle was making tea. 'The kettle, Browning,' she said. 'I brought her the kettle from the fire,' Mr. Browning related, 'and then—it was very stupid of me, but I looked round, and I did not know exactly what to do with it, and I—I—well, *I put it down on the table!*' And Mrs. Carlyle rose in her wrath. That he should pretend he had forgotten the habits of his native land! 'You!' she exclaimed. 'You! to return with your Italian ways, and to put a kettle down on the table!'

But there were those—and it is possible that Mr. Browning, for all his human kindness, was one of them—to whom the thought occurred that, though the proper place for a kettle was not the table cloth, neither was it the hand of Robert Browning.

One morning breakfast was interrupted by a most dramatic incident which interested Browning mightily. This was the sudden advent of a Russian deputation to Mr. Browning's host. Such a disturbance of a quiet Scottish literary breakfast! Such a troop of long-haired, strange men! Such a profusion of bows (in which Mr. Browning joined)! Such Slavonic dignity! And ah! such utter and complete incomprehensibility on both sides in spite of the interpreter! A mighty scroll was unrolled, was read with emphasis and declamation by the spokesman, and rapidly rendered by the gesticulating interpreter, and we were made aware that the recipient had become something or other very grand and learned of Moscow University. And then again a profusion of bows (in which again Mr. Browning joined), this time expressive of gratitude

and wonder on the part of the greatly honoured graduate of Moscow, and in a moment Russia had swept out of our dining-room as rapidly as it had entered. But that scroll was much valued, and is religiously preserved.

One evening Edinburgh was illuminated. Now when Edinburgh, whose wonderful natural loveliness is so stern and cold, condescends to the foreign aid of joyous illuminations, the dazzling effect is as when a beautiful woman dons her diamonds.

The academic citizens, and the great strangers within their gates, had on this evening of the illuminations been hospitably bidden to the house of one of our professors and his wife, who at that time were the enviable possessors of a home in Princes Street. There everyone gathered on the roof. It was an evening never to be forgotten, poised halfway between an enchanted earth and a starry heaven. It was, indeed, Olympia, that roof, for it was inhabited by the gods. Mr. Browning came a little late, for he had been walking with his hostess, admiring the myriads of lights of the Old Town on the height, as seen from the New Town on the plains. They had talked of travel, and she had expressed her love for travel, and a little envy of his constant opportunities.

'But *this*,' he said, looking round at the supreme loveliness of the scene, '*this* is travel!'

'To you,' she reminded him.

And at that he looked down at her, with his ever-ready understanding.

'Ah, yes! I see.' It was Home to her.

Another evening there was a ball. Mr. Browning insisted on attending it. He left the ball early with his host; but, it is reported, 'he did not *want* to leave.' In our drawing-room, before the departure to the ball, he had asked the eldest daughter of the house to give him the first waltz. At the Assembly Rooms, when the first waltz began, Mr. Browning was one of a line of *savants* who were looking on at the scene, and from this line he stepped out to meet his partner, and they stood together watching the dancing.

One night a short appearance had to be made at the theatre, where the long rehearsed amateur performance of an adaptation of the 'Fortunes of Nigel' took place. But Mr. Browning was very tired that night, and his hostess guarded her precious charge from interruption during a little involuntary nap taken in the shadow of the curtain of the box.

At a semi-public conversazione held in the Museum of Science

and Art it became apparent that Mr. Browning was drawing the crowd as a magnet draws steel shavings. When he walked the crowd surged after; when he paused the crowd waited; when he moved on again the tide was again at the full. It became a little embarrassing. This same partner of the first waltz, who was walking about with him, tells how they suddenly came, in the course of their wanderings, into a vast room, and face to face with an enormous glass case containing one magnificent stuffed lion, isolated and angry. 'Mr. Browning,' she whispered, as the crowd surged behind them, 'it seems as if you would be safer if *you* were in that case instead of that other lion.'

But later on his hostess asked him apologetically: 'Do you object to all this adulation?' And he answered readily and heartily, and perhaps with a kindly desire to relieve her mind: 'Object to it! No; I have waited forty years for it, and now—I like it!'

It was at the end of this conversazione that Mr. Browning's crush hat went a-missing. He had shown much adroitness in recovering everyone else's belongings, and had carefully adjusted all the cloaks and wraps, and then it appeared that he regretfully knew his own hat to be still amid the medley in the over-crowded cloak-room. He took it extremely calmly, dived back into the vortex, and presently returned nursing the truant lovingly.

How simple and happy—almost boyish—he was, amid all the adulation! So unlike what one would have imagined a great poet and seer and teacher. Unlike in appearance, for he was such a dapper, well-groomed, sprightly figure,—nothing of the melancholy intensity of Tennyson. He might, someone said, have been taken for a sea captain. This may have been suggested by that short, nautical-looking pilot coat he wore. But then his eyes!—dark, piercing, wonderful eyes they were!

Unlike was he too in manner to the conventional idea of a poet; is not the adjective usually 'dreamy'? In Browning there was nothing aloof or awesome. He was a brilliant talker, quickly alive to all going on about him, humanly and genuinely interested in all the small social claims of the moment. His frank appreciation of his own genius seemed always to take the generous form of readiness to gratify others. He always gave both his hands when he read enthusiasm in the face of one brought up to be presented to him, and no doubt everyone so honoured held those hands the 'very little longer.'

And, again, how clear is the recollection of timidly carrying him one or two of the many albums and birthday books that had been sent to receive, if possible, his autograph, and of the readiness with which he took a pen and signed one after the other. His host came in and protested, and an anxious excuse was made—these were only a few favoured ones—there was a heap ever so high that Mr. Browning was not being troubled with.

‘Oh, the poor dears! Give me a large sheet of paper and I’ll sign it all over,’ he cried, and, pen in hand, looked round him for the sheet of paper. But his host intervened, would not allow even self-imposed martyrdom, and carried him off.

One afternoon Mr. Browning went alone to call on Lady Kinloch, an old friend of his own, and our near neighbour. He returned, having paid the call; and it was not till long after that we heard the characteristic story of what had happened on the way.

‘He must have been very egotistic,’ somebody said of Browning, ‘for when he was here in Edinburgh a friend of a friend of mine was standing on her doorstep, just starting out, when an elderly gentleman asked her to direct him to some house near. She could not tell him, but offered to look it up for him in the directory, and took him into the house, produced a directory, and together they found out what he wanted to know, and then came out to the doorstep again, so that she could point out to him the direction he had to take. He thanked her, went down the steps, hesitated, and then turned and came back to her, saying: “Perhaps you may like to know to whom you have been so kind? I am a poor poet, and my name is Robert Browning.”’

The imputation of egoism was warmly denied, of course. It was his thoughtful kindness and generosity! It was just like him. He knew he could, in return for a gracious courtesy on the part of an unknown lady, give her, as rich reward, a memory for life. Would not the real egoism have been to withhold it—from false pride or shyness? ‘Who was your friend’s friend?’ it was asked; but this had been forgotten, the story was hearsay. Well, probably, it was urged, the room she took him into—it being Edinburgh—was the room behind the dining-room, which is always ‘the study’ or ‘the library’ (if it is not a consulting room), and there would have been more and other books than the directory. There may even have been a complete and much handled edition of Browning. He would have seen that the meeting would be ‘a moulted feather, an eagle’s feather.’

This explanation received confirmation some years later. The story was related again, this time in Mull, and this time 'my sister' was the heroine of the incident. And the name of that sister, the name of her well-known husband, of his famous grandfather, is a name that has ever been associated in Edinburgh with books and literature; and Browning's chance encounter with Mrs. Constable seems to make a link between him and the Edinburgh of Sir Walter Scott.

But his kindness was not only to those who were his readers. One day one of his host's family wanted to run across a piece of wet pavement to a cab, in which she was to drive home with her father and Mr. Browning.

'But what about your shoes, my dear child—are they thick shoes?' And he knelt down and took one paw into his hand.

How splendid was the ovation our students gave to Robert Browning! It was at the students' own reception to the Tercentenary guests. Several of the great *savants* made speeches—each within ten minutes—each in his native language. De Lesseps spoke in French; Virchow in German. It was all very lucid and quite easy to follow, no doubt. In the Frenchman's voluble utterances, 'le Canal de Suez—le Canal de Suez' was reiterated with the insistence of a dominant note; and Virchow repeatedly and impressively advised the young scholars of Scotland against placing their trust in 'blosse logische Möglichkeiten.'

Mr. Browning had wrung a sacred promise from the son of his host, who was in especial authority on this occasion, that he would not be called on to speak. He never made speeches; he had never made a speech in his life. But suddenly, towards the end of the occasion, the ovation began. It was the young generation calling for the poet whom they, and not those of his own generation, had discovered and loved. Had he not 'waited forty years'?

The body of students in the centre of the hall rose—rose to a man. 'Browning! Browning!' they shouted. They scrambled on to the benches, waving sticks: 'Browning! Browning!'

He who had given the sacred promise whispered to someone on the platform that this must be stopped, for Mr. Browning would not speak—he never—

A storm of cheering stopped him, and he turned to discover Mr. Browning had risen to his feet. There he stood, the white-headed, eagle-eyed, metaphysical poet, stirred and touched to make the one and only speech he ever had made, or ever would

make, in all his life, impelled by the insistence of the young excitement and enthusiasm he faced in that sea of eager youths, mostly Scottish, and therefore metaphysicians and Browningites by nature.

The week passed, as weeks will, the lights were turned out, the voices silenced. But:

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

But you were living before that,
And you are living after,

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone—

And so the week had passed by, like any other week; and the guest had gone, like any other guest—had, indeed, like any other guest, left his umbrella behind him. Why did we not commandeer Browning's umbrella? It must have been immediately sent to him, for the following letter speaks of it:

19 Warwick Crescent, W. Apr. 21, '84.

My dear Professor,—The last proof of your goodness to me, in the shape of a restitution of my straying articles, has just arrived. What can I say, or hope ever to say, concerning your treatment of me this last week—which you helped to make purely enjoyable?

Do not trouble yourself to search the old numbers of the 'Athenæum' for the letter of Leigh Hunt. Here is the original,—which may serve, as well as anything else I can think of, to put you in mind of me sometimes in after-days. Mrs. Masson perhaps remembers that I said I never gave away a piece of my wife's handwriting except to those I loved indeed. May I venture to give her the translations which accompany this letter? As for my other three friends (so rich may one become of a sudden, at all events in Scotland!) I shall find some way of keeping myself in their remembrance when I have time to discover a more appropriate one.

I enclose two photographs requested by the Senatus Academicus. Will you please to forward them—along with the 'Two separate autographs'?

Ever yours most gratefully,

ROBERT BROWNING.

The translations, in Mrs. Browning's delicate hand, are 'Psyche and Pan' and 'Psyche propitiating Ceres,' and are endorsed at the end in Mr. Browning's own beautiful legible writing: 'This translation by E. B. B., in her handwriting, is sent to Mrs. Masson as the

only acknowledgment Robert Browning is able to make for her perfect kindness last week.—Apr. 21, '84.'

The letter of Leigh Hunt (five closely written pages, different shades of foreign paper, and tied together with red embroidery silk) is enclosed in its original envelope, addressed: 'Robert Browning, Esq., Ferma in Posta, Firenze, Italia,' with two old shilling stamps and one penny one, and the postmark bearing the date 'Jan. V., '57.' And at the back, below the broken red seal, it is endorsed: 'Offered to my kind host, and dear friend now, in memory of the delightful week I was privileged to spend at the house of Professor Masson.—Robert Browning, Apr. 21, '84.'

Of Browning's later letters (one of the last is on the back of a calling card, left at a door in London, and the last of all is written from 29 de Vere Gardens), many refer to that week at Edinburgh. One (addressed to Orme Masson) has an added postscript to say:

Pray tell your Father that, having to be painted for Balliol College,—and therefore to endure the Doctor's robe,—that is, the Oxford one,—I surmount it by the Edinburgh Badge,—the hood he so generously presented me with: no be-doctoring for me without *that*!

Another (addressed to Professor David Masson) begins:

I thank you most sincerely for your gracious words,—glad and proud if anything in my poem may have pleased you.

And ends:

All love to you and the dear and kind Household at this appropriate season for good wishes!—from

Yours affectionately ever,
ROBERT BROWNING.

And one other may be quoted:

My dear Professor Masson,—I read your two Lectures on Carlyle with delight indeed: the latter gave me especial pleasure . . .

All kindest regards to your dear family: the goodness of that memorable week is never long out of my mind, but will not certainly be absent next week, when I attend our Oxford Commemoration.

Ever truly yours,
ROBERT BROWNING.

His host of 'that memorable week' was, on Old Year's Day, 1889, one of the pall-bearers who laid Robert Browning to rest in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, as he was one of the mourners when Alfred Tennyson was laid there three years later.

There are the two graves, side by side, on the floor of an aisle of the great Abbey :

. . . by death, fools think, imprisoned.

. . . It is all a memory now—a blurred memory, some of it. There he lies in the silence of the Abbey, with the ‘bustle of man’s worktime’ close outside. There are his poems in the bookshelf, ready to solace and uphold. And in another hundred years, perhaps, another poet will come to our Capital, and another generation of citizens will welcome him. He will be fêted and lionised, listened to and wondered at. . . . What will *his* poems be like? And will his generation sing Burns’s love-songs and read our Browning?

ROSALINE MASSON.

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ARCHIE'S PLEESURIN'.

ALL along the hillside from Clachan to Dunerave, and away beyond the green point as far as Inveraray, a heavy white cloud of mist lay sleepily, stretched full length on the drowsy Cowal hills. The mystery of early morning and the chill of the new day touched the heart with a wan feeling like as a cold room where the dead have lain will touch it; and the black water looked very deep and quiet. Then the sun came up over the hills and touched with light, new-born and joyous, the hither side of Strone Hill and the rugged head of the Old Grey Man who keeps watch over the dearest glen in the world. The Grey Man has always been old. He was made when God made the hills, and even then he had the wise face of an old man. He lies at the mouth of the glen with his knees cocked and his lips set firmly in an expression half cynical, half tender, always inscrutable; and he thinks a great deal and says nothing.

Sometimes when the moon is on the glen the hills tell each other strange secrets. And if you walk on the long silver road, and are quite alone—for only the solitary heart can understand—you may just catch what they are saying when they lay their hearts bare to the glamour of the moon: beautiful secrets that are felt, not known, half revealed, whispered by the chattering burns that carry tales, read as one reads the thoughts, too great for full expression, of the great-hearted. You may wander on the long white road and be filled with the mystic excitement of the night, and you may listen, listen—it is a tense, wonderful feeling—and just catch something of the secrets of the stars and the moon, and of beauty and of the great-hearted hills.

But the Old Grey Man never tells any of his secrets. He watches and lies still, and no one will ever be able to say what he is thinking about. Some day the railway will come through the glen from Arrochar, and men will pierce the sides of the old beautiful hills with iron and steel. A fussy engine will steam through the solemn glen, and the hills will no longer tell each other secrets in the eerie moonlight. But the Old Grey Man will still say nothing, but will keep his strange inscrutable look while the world lasts, or until some

playful tourists come by the train and climb the hill and mutilate the grand old face—such things have been known of tourists.

The sun rose still higher, and made a path of glory which only a few Highland beasties saw, and the drowsy mists stirred regretfully in their sleep and shrank upward from the calm deep loch and crept up the hillside to die presently among the rusty bracken that grows above the woods.

A robin perched among some scarlet berries on the hedge, and sang a little sad song about winter and the short cold lonely days that were coming, and a big heron flopped lazily across the loch with slow heavy wings. A little trail of blue reek rose from the shore-cottage, and Archie came and stood at his doorway, with the shining loch before him, and the yellow seaweed stretched upon the shore, and the big hills watching over the glen. And he thanked God for all that was there, and turned his face to the warm sun and smiled. For he remembered what he could not see. Archie had been blind these many years.

Everyone was very kind to him. We used often to go and sit with him in the low, dark cottage where he lived alone, but there was light in the dim house of the blind man as he talked to us of things not seen but known. Quaint tales he used to tell us, too, of lawless Highland chiefs and their brave doings; many an old-world Highland story died when Archie died last winter. He loved every legend of the countryside, and would talk to us for hours about them, and we sat enthralled, pleased when he told us that he liked our gentle voices, and promising to come again and see him in the summer-time. But he died before summer came, and the place does not seem the same without old Archie. The hills and the shore are the same, but the cottage doorway is empty, and we do not row across the loch any more in the gloaming to see the old man whose heart was always in the better place.

But now the sun was fully up, and a boat put off from the Cairndubh side, rowed steadily by a pair of strong arms. The still loch was filled full of shadowy streaked hills and trees, and the boat cut a silvery passage through them, and gently swayed the misty scene, then grounded softly amongst the seaweed on the broken shore below Archie's cottage.

'Latha briagh!' said the rower, which means 'A fine day,' but as I have not got the Gaelic I must needs write in the English tongue, which is poor and common compared with the endearing speech of the Highlands.

'It will be a beautiful day,' said Archie, 'och, och, aye, a beautiful day.'

'You will be getting out whatever?' said Donald the rower.

'Maybe the maiden will take my chair to the door, when she comes to give me my breakfast,' said Archie.

'I haf my boat,' said Donald. 'Will ye no be thinking of coming for a sail?'

'It iss this many years since I wass on the water,' said Archie.

In the Highlands we do not make what they call in England direct answers. We think the English too quick with their decisive 'shall and shan't,' and they think us very stupid for lack of these.

'I wass thinking to take ye for a day's pleesure juist.'

'Eh me!' said Archie, 'the Lord hass laid Hiss hand upon me, and I will not be thinking of pleesurin'.'

'It iss a while sin ye wad be by the door,' said Donald.

'It will be all that.'

'And you will not get out when the winter comes.'

'I will be content,' said Archie. 'What He sends He will give strength to thole.'

'But if I wass to put you across in the boat to the ither side?'

'Eh, man,' said Archie, 'I am not dressed for the ither side.'

'You will sune shift your clothes.'

'I would not like to seek out for pleesure,' said Archie; 'it iss Hiss will that I should sit in darkness.'

But he went back to the kist and lovingly fingered his blacks.

'Where would ye be for, Archie?' said the young man, when they were seated in the boat. 'I wass thinking ye will chuse your ain pleesure, but it must be a fine spree whatever.'

'If ye wad be willin', I haf but one wish, and I haf had it these many years.'

'Chuse you, juist.'

'I wad be ferry pleased to go to the kirkyaird to veesit some auld freens o' mine who lie there.'

'We will manage that to you, indeed,' said Donald, and he spat on his hands and swung to his oars.

Some white clouds came up on the clear sky, their cool shadow resting on the hills in the glen, like a hand laid in blessing on some loved head.

Donald moored the boat, and the two walked to the little churchyard, with its old stones facing the hills, and their backs

turned to the less steadfast loch. It is a quiet resting-place among the hills : the dead sleep well here. The shrill coo-ees of the gulls on the yellow shore do not disturb them, the plaint of the whaup on the hillside makes wail for them : no railway has come to the glen yet.

'I ken the road,' said Archie.

He threaded his way among the green graves, and stood by a plain slab with many names cut upon it.

'It will be Peter McCandlish's stane,' said Archie. He stooped down and fingered the lettering on the stone and murmured, 'Puir Pete, he was a real thrawn man—but neebourly,' he added, with his ever-ready charity, 'neebourly when ye didna contradeek him.'

'Ye'll mind Betty Jamieson,' said Donald, passing on to a stone that leaned slightly, 'hur that they wad be for putting in the auld kirkyaird. But Betty wass na sae far through as they were thinking. And she turned roun' in the bed, and she wad be saying, "Na, na, I'll no be in the auld kirkyaird. Pit me ower to the new one where I can lie and see the folks passing."'

'Thiss will be John McCrae's wife,' said Archie, fingering the letters of the next headstone ; 'puir body, she wass an ill loss tae John.'

'And the littlin wass no long following her,' said Donald. 'John saw greevous affliction.'

'I wass reading the Word to John's father when he slippit awa',' said Archie, 'och, och, aye. "Hoo's wi' ye, Colin?" I said, for I thocht his breeth wass coming strange. "No juist verra weel," said Colin, and afore I could fetch his wumman he was by wi' it.'

'Ay, and ye were wi' Sandy Clark too, I mind, when he changed.'

(We say 'changed' in the Highlands ; it is a better word than 'died.')

'Deed that wass the ferry sad thing. I will mind that Meg Saunders streetched him, and she was barely through, afore hiss brither wass awa' tae.'

'And five o' his bairns wass gone afore him. That wass a gran petty—a gran peety.'

'Hamish Millar got grace afore he wass taen,' said Archie, leaning his arm, with the caress of a friend, upon a moss-grown stone.

'Ay, juist in time.'

'But he'll get a guid welcome whatever,' said Archie; 'the Lord is greater than oor hairts.'

'Mither's no far frae here,' said Donald, 'if ye wad come roun' by the wa'.'

They stepped across some mounds, the young man leading the old one carefully, till they stood by a new-cut stone.

'When the tribble came tae us last winter,' said Donald, 'I think she kenned.'

'Ay, they ken,' said Archie, 'they're no far awa'.'

The shadows were creeping up the brae-face as they rowed home again, but there was a shining behind the hills, and one knew how it was that St. John could tell that the streets of the city were of pure gold.

The moon came up and filled the glen with silver light, and the hills looked with their old strange inscrutable look at the long white road and the silent loch.

And down below an old man was smiling in the darkness—the unbroken darkness—and saying to himself, 'Och ay, I haf had the gran' day, the fine day amongst my freen's.'

For Archie thought, as I do, that they are not far awa'.

S. MACNAUGHTAN.

THE BRIGANDS' FOREST.

THERE is no rock-scenery in the Calabrian Sila forest ; no waterfalls or other Alpine features. It is all undulating country, the hill-tops covered with beeches or sombre pines, the valleys partly arable and partly pasture land. Were it not for the absence of heather with its peculiar mauve tints, one might well imagine oneself in Scotland. There is the same smiling alternation of woodland and meadow, the same huge boulders of gneiss and granite which give a distinctive tone to the landscape, the same stretches of bracken, the same exuberance of living waters. Water, indeed, is one of the chief glories of the Sila ; everywhere it bubbles forth in chill rivulets among the stones and trickles down the hillsides to join the larger streams that wend their way to the forlorn and fever-stricken coastlands of Magna Greecia.

One of the largest of these rivers is the Neto, the classic Neaithos sung by Theocritus, which falls into the sea north of Cotrone ; the town of San Giovanni, the capital of the Sila district, overlooks its raging flood. The very names of these streams—Neto, Arvo, Ampollina, Lese—are redolent of pastoral life. All of them are stocked with trout ; they meander in their upper reaches through valleys grazed by far-tinkling flocks of sheep and goats and grey cattle, and their banks in spring time must be brilliant with a thousand blossoms. At the time of my visit, in August, vegetation hereabouts was exhausted, almost the only plant which attracted attention being a prodigious ground-thistle of pale gold, the counterpart of the silvery one of the Alps ; but I saw enough of the relics of spring and summer to realise what a paradise of flowers the Sila must be at those seasons. The character of its upper region is sub-Alpine, and the air so keen that even on the 24th of August a lump of snow, which a goat-boy produced as his contribution to our luncheon, did not melt in the bright sunshine on the summit of Monte Nero ; in winter the snow lies deep and long, the flocks retire to the lower pastures in November, and only return to these breezy heights in June.

The Sila is one of the few regions in Europe where genuine *Urwald*, or primary jungle, can still be seen. The immense domain

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of Gariglione, for instance, has been a virgin forest from time immemorial. It is a dusky ridge, visible from afar, and no one who visits the Sila should omit to take a few steps into this almost impenetrable tangle of mighty forest trees. From San Giovanni it is a walk of about four and a half hours; but the effect of the vegetation is still grander when approached from the South, from Petilia. The name is derived from its oaks (*garigli*), but it contains also large tracts of pines as well as thousands of bearded firs, almost the last of their race to be seen in Italy, rising to a height of fifty metres out of the moist soil in which their progenitors lie decaying. It is cool and dim in this jungle as in a rocky cave, and nothing breaks the stillness save the hoarse cry of buzzards and eagles, the tap of the woodpecker, or some squirrel as it scampers up the rough bark. From these trees, which in former times must have covered the Sila region, was made that Bruttian pitch mentioned by Strabo and other ancient writers; from them the Tarentines built their fleets. The pine is a particular variety known as the 'Pino della Sila' (*Pinus laricio*, var. *Calabra*); it is spread over this whole country, and grows to a height of forty metres, with a silvery grey trunk, exhaling a strong aromatic fragrance. In youth, especially where the soil is deep, this tree shoots up prim and demure as a Nuremberg toy, but in old age it becomes monstrous—high-perched upon some lonely granite boulder, its roots writhing over the bare stone like the arms of an octopus, it sits firm and unmoved, deriding the tempest and flinging fantastic arms into the air—a fit emblem of tenacity and desolation.

Wonderful tales are still told of the brigands in these forests. Buried treasure has been found, and even nowadays the shepherds sometimes discover decayed shelters of bark and tree trunks built by them in the thickest part of the woods. There are legends, too, of caverns wherein they hid their booty, caverns with cunningly concealed entrances; but I take these to be a pure invention, as the native rock is not of the kind to produce caves. Bourbonism fostered the brood, and there was a fierce recrudescence in the troubled sixties. They lived in bands, *squadrigli*, and terrorised the whole region, burning and plundering with impunity. Whoever refused to comply with their demands for food or money was sure to repent of it sooner or later.

All this has now changed; the brigands of modern Italy have deserted the fastnesses of Sila and Abruzzi; they recline in the Chamber of Deputies, where no one molests them. It has become

the boast of the Silanese that their country is as safe as the streets of Naples. Qualified praise, this!

The last genuine bandit of the Sila was Gaetano Ricca. On account of some trivial misunderstanding with the authorities, this excellent man was compelled to take to the woods in the early eighties, where he lived a wild life for some three years. A price was set on his head, but his daring and knowledge of the country intimidated everyone. I should be sorry to believe in the number of *carabinieri* he is supposed to have killed; no doubt the truth came out during his subsequent trial. On one occasion he was surrounded, and while the officer in command of his pursuers, who had taken refuge behind a tree, ordered him to yield, Ricca waited patiently till the point of his enemy's foot became visible, when he pierced his ankle-bone with his last bullet and escaped. He afterwards surrendered and was imprisoned for twenty years or so; at present he is once more on the Sila, enjoying a green old age in his home near Parenti. If I had been aware of this fact at the time, I would have called on him to pay my respects, as I must have walked within a few yards of his house. His memoirs might be no less interesting than those of the Sardinian brigand Tolu which have been printed. It may be long before another outlaw of this kind appears on the Sila. Musolino infested the neighbouring Aspromonte up to a few years ago, and would no doubt be free to this day if he had not left the district, inasmuch as the officer who was sent to catch him was paid a fixed sum for every day he spent in the chase, and naturally found it in his interests never to discover his whereabouts. He is now languishing in solitary confinement on Elba, having been accidentally captured by two policemen who were searching for another man, and who nearly fainted when he pronounced his name. But this name of Musolino will long survive as that of a martyr and national hero; even at civilised Cosenza, I saw a play of which he was the leading figure, in which this rascal was depicted as a pale, long-suffering gentleman of the 'misunderstood' type, friend of the helpless, champion of widows and orphans, and rectifier of all wrongs.

San Giovanni in Fiore is the central village or town of the Sila; but it is central only in a geographical sense—the region immediately surrounding it is nowise representative. It lies on a rocky slope, facing southward, and the prospect towards the Ionian Sea is intercepted by hills. The neighbouring summits, which, with proper administration, could produce firewood in abundance, are

bare for miles around, and to gather a handful of fuel entails a scramble of two or three hours.

The only thing worth seeing in San Giovanni are the women. Their natural charms are enhanced by elaborate and tasteful golden ornaments, and by an attractive costume and mode of dressing the hair, two curls of which are worn hanging down before the ears with a mischievously seductive air. Many Calabrian towns and villages still possess their peculiar female costume; that of Tiriolo, I remember, is very gay in colour—I did not visit Cimigliano, which is celebrated in this respect—but in point of mere personal appearance I think it would be difficult to find anywhere an equal number of really handsome women in such a restricted space. Their eyes are black or of a deep gentian blue; their complexion pale; their movements and poses impressed with a stamp of great distinction. It is nothing short of a miracle how they manage to keep their good looks and the appearance of scrupulous cleanliness among their sordid surroundings; *they must use soap*, although I was assured that there was not one piece of that article in the whole Sila, and certainly saw no traces of it myself.

For San Giovanni is as dirty as can well be; it has all the accumulated filth of an Eastern town without any of its glowing tints and harmonious outlines. We are disposed to associate squalor with certain artistic effects, but it may be said of nearly all Calabrian villages that they have solved the problem how to be ineffably squalid without becoming in the least picturesque. Much of this grimy appearance is due to the smoke which issues out of all the windows and blackens the house-walls inside and out—the native persisting in a prehistoric fashion of cooking on the floor. The buildings themselves look crude and gaunt from their lack of plaster and eyeless windows; black pigs wallowing at every doorstep contribute to this slovenly *ensemble*. The City Fathers here have turned their backs upon civilisation; I daresay the magnitude of the task before them has paralysed their initiative. Nothing is done in the way of public hygiene, and I saw women washing linen in water which was neither more nor less than an open drain. There is no street lighting whatever; a proposal on the part of a North Italian society to draw electric power from the waters of the Neto, which foams below the town, was scornfully rejected; one single tawdry lamp, which was bought some years ago as a sample in a moment of municipal recklessness, has been lighted three times in as many years, and on the very day of the year when it was

least necessary, namely, midsummer (San Giovanni). It now hangs at a dangerous angle, and I doubt whether it will survive till its services are requisitioned next June. This in a town of 18,000 inhabitants, and in Italy, where the evening life of the populace plays such an important rôle! No wonder North Italians, judging by such external indications, regard all Calabrians as savages.

This place must be very unhealthy. Upon my arrival, the pangs of hunger induced me to ask for some eggs, but I was informed that none were procurable, because the *invalids eat them all*. I then suggested a chicken, but the girl frankly told me 'You will never be able to pay for it.' Milk is worth sixty centimes a litre, and, of course, the invalids get all there is of it. I never saw a drop, and eggs only on one occasion, when an inspector of some kind put in an appearance and devoured two of them, the rest of us looking on enviously. No doubt they had been ordered weeks beforehand in anticipation of his visit, or perhaps, to make sure, he had brought them with him.

Altogether, San Giovanni has a bad prognosis. As regards situation, it cannot compare with Savelli or the neighbouring Casino, which have truly noble, soul-inspiring views over the whole Sila, and southward down its many folded undulations that descend in a grand procession of twenty miles towards the blue Ionian, where sparkles the gleaming horn of Cotrone. The water supply of San Giovanni is tainted, and as I crawled and skipped among its unsavoury tenements I could not help regretting that recent earthquakes had spared them. If I were tyrant of the place, I would certainly begin by a general bombardment. The only thing worth preserving is the portal of the church, a large and finely proportioned structure of black stone, which looked ill at ease among its ignoble environment. A priest, to whom I applied for information as to its history, told me that he had never thought about the matter—straightforward, at least, like most Calabrians!

It was impossible to convince these good folks that I did not visit their mountain for some commercial speculation or to spy out the nakedness of the land. On arriving one evening at one of the larger places, an amiable citizen at once took me aside and assured me that there was not a *soldo* of money to be made there, and that, fortunately for myself, I should find a diligence leaving early next morning. One old man, I remember, was particularly anxious to find out the real reason of my visit. My secret, he gave me to understand, would be inviolably kept by him; indeed, he had

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friends, influential friends, in various parts of the district who might, upon occasion, be useful to me in my speculations. If I was not an engineer, why did I carry a field-glass? Was it electricity, or some new railway? There were minerals, too; salt mines at Caccuri; could it be gold? Travelling for pleasure? Who travels for pleasure on the Sila, when there are the mighty cities of Cotrone and Catanzaro so near at hand?

The men on the Sila are such poor creatures in comparison with their wives and daughters that I am sure the ancient Hellenic civilisation which spread along the shores of both surrounding seas never climbed up into this trackless gloom, for wherever Greek blood can be traced the reverse selection has taken place. Unlike the Greek women and unlike those in many mountainous districts of Western Europe, these Bruttian Italiotes have learned the secret of making their men do all the hard work; none but the poorest of them bear burdens or indulge in any form of manual labour; beyond a little weaving, they do absolutely nothing except chatter with each other or with the priests, and spend their husbands' money (the husbands are nearly all emigrants in America). Hence they remain stately and unwrinkled through life, and it would be interesting to know for how many generations this female selection has been going on. The males have no constant type of physiognomy, and whoever expects to find the poetic shepherds for which the Sila was renowned will be disappointed. These shepherds are either evil-featured boys, indescribably dirty, or shrewd fellows of middle age, keeping strict business accounts for their masters of every ounce of cheese and butter produced. Only once I saw anything approaching the ideal—two curly-haired radiant striplings, reclining *sub tegmine fagi* in the best Virgilian style, and whistling, in emulation, wondrous dances and melodies of their native shore. But they were not Sila born; they had come up from the lower flanks of the hills to tend their masters' flocks.

I asked them, as I asked many others, about the double tibia, that venerable instrument of music which is familiar in classic sculpture and literature, and still found, they say, among these hills. But the answer was everywhere the same; they knew it; so-and-so used to play it; certain *maestri* in certain villages still made it, or sometimes the boys cut it for themselves—they described it accurately enough, but could not produce a specimen. Single pipes, yes; and bagpipes galore; but the *fischietto a pariglia*, as they called it, was 'out of fashion' wherever I asked for it.

Nearly all the cattle on the Sila, like the land itself, belong to large proprietors. These great *signori* are for the most part invisible; they inhabit their town-houses, and the very name of the Sila sends a cold shudder through their bones; their revenues are collected from the shepherds by agents, who seem to do the work with the conscientiousness of the race. In one hut I observed a small fragment of the skin of a newly killed kid; the wolf had eaten it the night before, and the shepherd was keeping this *corpus delicti* in order to prove to the agent that he was innocent of the murder. There was something naïve in his honesty, as if a shepherd could not eat a kid as well as any wolf, and preserve a fragment of its skin! The agent, no doubt, would hand it on to his signore, by way of 'confirmation and verification.' For though the old wolves are shot and killed by spring guns and dynamite, while the young ones are caught alive in steel traps and other appliances, the numbers of this formidable beast are still large enough to preoccupy the shepherds. I was therefore surprised to see what a poor breed of dogs they keep; scraggy mongrels, for the most part, that run for their lives at the mere sight of a wolf who can, and does, bite them into two pieces with one snap of his jaws. Fortunately, human beings are seldom attacked in the Sila, a dog or a pig being generally forthcoming when the usual prey is not to be found. Yet only a few months before my arrival a sad affair had occurred: the wolf had carried off a small boy before the eyes of his parents, who pursued him, powerless to help; the head and arms had been already devoured before a shot from a neighbour killed the beast. Truly, *un grande dispiacere di famiglia*, as my informant styled it.

The postal-diligence service in these hills is no doubt good enough for its purpose, but it is naturally slow, as the distances are great, and the country, especially the approaches to the Sila, often torn into deep ravines which take long hours to negotiate. For a short trip, it would be better to engage a motor-car, which can cover the distance from Cosenza to San Giovanni in two hours, while a carriage takes fourteen; athletic persons will find a bicycle preferable to the usual mode of travelling. The chief connecting roads are well engineered, and their surface, being of primary rock, hardly ever becomes dusty. But whoever steps aside from the principal roads must needs be a good walker, for the paths are so rough that riding on a mule or donkey, especially on a Calabrian saddle, is almost as fatiguing as going on foot; he must also have the digestion of an ostrich.

But in this last respect the Sila is sure to improve within the next few years ; Italians themselves will see to this, for the whole of Italy is becoming prosperous, and its inhabitants are daily 'discovering' new regions into which to escape from the heats of the plains. And the Calabrians are no exception to the rest of their countrymen ; the common people are already far better educated than those of the Neapolitan province, and Catanzaro can set an example to many a northern town as regards progressiveness. This was borne in upon me on the evening of my arrival there in a telling manner. I had entered a shop to buy some article, and found the shopman engaged in a hot argument with another customer : they were discussing the literary merits of Xenophon's *Agésilao*s. Hardly had I recovered from this shock when I received a greater : would I be so kind as to decide the question for them ? Glancing, in my hotel, at the table-knives, which all over Europe bear the familiar legend 'Sheffield' or 'Solingen,' I noticed that these were proudly stamped 'Catanzaro.' A race of such mental activity will not be long before they appreciate the summer charm of the Sila which lies at their house-doors. Soon there will probably be respectable inns established at many of its pretty sites, at the thirty-first or thirty-sixth milestone from Cosenza, for instance, which would combine accessibility with coolness and picturesqueness, and whither food-supplies from the rich Crati valley could be brought daily.

The hope of the Sila lies not in its altitude above the sea—the whole backbone of Italy is a wilderness of mountains—but in its forests. *Viderint consules*. The South Italian sobriety and objective view of life is a wholesome antidote to our sentimentalism and *Schwaermerei*, but it has dangers of its own. It is apt to degenerate into canniness of the wrong sort, into the canniness of those who overlook a distant but sure profit in their frenzy to grasp the present. The forests of the Sila may be exploited, but if they are exploited after the fashion of the Abruzzi and Apennines, the traveller in search of freshness and beauty will turn his steps elsewhere.

NORMAN DOUGLAS.

A PARSON OF THE THIRTIES.

BY S. G. TALLENTYRE.

AMID all the drastic social changes of the last seventy or eighty years, none has been greater than the change in the life, and the scheme of life, the manners, the aim, the conduct of the English parson.

It is not only that the pompous, comfortable, dignified princes of the Church, with their fat emoluments and ample leisure to edit Greek plays, have given place to strenuous and younger prelates, who are lucky if they survive the herculean labours of their diocese a dozen years, and luckier still if they can make its income suffice to its new and monstrous needs. It is not only that the hunting parson of the shires—keeping his own pack of hounds, very likely—with his loud voice, his love of ‘a cheerful glass,’ and his limited, lax view of his obligations, has faded into a memory. Even in that most slow-moving and conservative of all places—a Cathedral close—the agitating hand of time has been at work, and, having roused from their decent and peaceful slumbers dean and archdeacon, has shaken into activity canons, prebendaries, and minor canons, so that none have entirely escaped the benefits—and the losses—of a great reform.

It may be not uninteresting, perhaps, to recall the memory of a parson who preceded that reform, who was a member of a society unusually witty and cultivated, and in himself an excellent type of an order of cleric which has passed away.

In the year 1835, when Blomfield was its bishop and Copleston its dean, St. Paul’s Cathedral, in the City of London, was almost as different a place from the admirably cared for, the well swept and garnished Cathedral of to-day, as the placid city of the thirties without it was different from the roaring city of the twentieth century. A dim, misty, cobwebby place, this old Cathedral, where the infrequent services, droned out in the choir, lulled into deep, refreshing slumbers a few dark, scattered figures, who formed the sole congregation; where ancient and toothless vergers hobbled about, doing nothing in particular (for these were the blessed days

when the fact that a man could no longer do his work was not held to be a reason why he should no longer be paid for it), and when the present numerous and eager parties of sightseers, intelligent about monuments, were replaced by a rare and solitary antiquary, roaming ghostlike through the aisles.

Without, in the Churchyard, were shops of ancient foundation and unimpeachable respectability; lumbering stage coaches, up from the country; the prosperous gig of the City merchant; the phaeton of the man of fashion from the West; the residential houses of some of the Cathedral clergy, notably of Barham, the 'Thomas Ingoldsby' of the 'Ingoldsby Legends,' and, since 1821, Minor Canon of St. Paul's.

Hard by, at the end of Paternoster Row, there was, as there is now, Amen Court or Corner (a very dark corner), where great gates shut in, as they shut in still, the close or more residential houses of canons and minor canons, some squares of barren grass, some families of sooty but cheerful sparrows, and a welcome air of quiet in the midst of turmoil, and of solitude in the midst of crowds.

Here, since 1831, had lived, as Canon Residentiary, Sydney Smith, 'the wittiest Englishman since Swift'; kindest, manliest straightest of parsons or diners-out; a radical reformer in a very sanctuary of Torydom; an excellent parish priest at a date when the country incumbent's conception of his duty was certainly easy.

Also in Amen Corner had lived, until his death in 1833, Canon Hughes, and that charming, accomplished Scotswoman, his wife, who made in the Corner the nearest approach to a *salon* the City of London ever knew, who was famous for her delightful singing, her wonderful *répertoire* of legends and ghost stories, and as the friend, the hostess, and correspondent of Sir Walter Scott. After 1833, Amen Corner was no longer her home; but her connexion with it still continued in her constant letters to and from Minor Canon Barham; and it is largely to her legendary lore and energetic inspiration the world owes the publication of one of the classics of humour—a fact 'Thomas Ingoldsby' generously acknowledged when he wrote in her copy of the 'Legends':—

To Mrs. Hughes, who *made* me do 'em.
Quod placeo est—si placeo—tuum.

No. 3 Amen Corner had been just vacated by Dr. Blomberg, the adopted son of good Queen Charlotte; chaplain to his brother-

by-adoption, George IV; Canon of St. Paul's, and an accomplished fiddler, so devoted to his art that it was whispered that, out of respect for his office and the sabbatarianism of the times, he kept a greased bow so that he could play silently on Sundays.

Into this No. 3—a dark, pleasant, roomy, comfortable, old house, with its torch extinguishers still above its doorstep, and its oak panelled rooms—there came, in 1835, a certain Minor Canon Hall, his wife, and a large little family. Holding his minor canonry since 1826, he was already one of the Cathedral circle, but had hitherto lived at Clerkenwell, or, very occasionally, at his country living of Sandon. Aged now about forty-three, cheery and round-faced, quick-tempered, generous, hospitable; with a full, benevolent chin above his bands; plenty of humour and shrewdness in the pleasant eyes; much good sense without cleverness, some scholarship, a little wit of his own, a great appreciation of wit in others, and so genially delighting in society he must needs have been delightful to it—this, if letters, portraits, memoirs, and memories are to be trusted, was certainly the man. Add to such qualities much sanguineness and briskness, an honest creed, unconfused and unperplexed, and a code of conduct not too exacting, but simply and faithfully followed.

He was already Chaplain in Ordinary to King William IV at his Majesty's Chapel Royal, and evening lecturer at the Church of St. Augustine and St. Faith, by St. Paul's. In this same 1835 he was made chaplain to Lord Oxford, an old friend of his wife's family, and inducted (in lieu of Sandon, resigned) into the more lucrative living of St. Bene't, Paul's Wharf—now the Welsh Church of London—a cold and depressing Wren edifice, looking on to the very undelectable thoroughfare of Upper Thames Street.

His wife, of gentler blood than himself—she came of an old Welsh family—still looks from a picture, painted in these early days of her life in Amen Corner, as a slight and gentle woman, bearing in the expression of her face the languor of ill-health, with brown curls shading the transparency of her complexion, and delicate, fair arms escaping from the lace of a scarf.

Long ill of an undefined and wasting complaint, her children—mites of delicate little girls for the most part—never remembered her healthy and well. But, though she died when the eldest of them was but thirteen, and though she was never a strong mind or even a strong character, there was in her so great and gentle

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a force of religious devotion, that the smallest and simplest of them felt its influence throughout their lives.

As a wife, she admired and obeyed her husband with all the Early-Victorian woman's simple faith in the man as necessarily the superior creature. But perhaps his Reverence knew—one fancy he did know—that in the languid figure on the sofa in the drawing-room upstairs lay the real power and influence of his house, and that the very orders and plans given always by the cheerful and busy master were not the less of her quiet inspiration.

The word 'busy' is used advisedly. Certainly, of the parson, town or country, of this day much more is required than of the parson of that day. But his Reverence was yet very far from idle. In that calm, dark study, smelling of the backs of books, with its heavy curtains and deep, silent carpet, he composed sermons which (they were duly published in a volume, bound in the thickest and most serious calf) would astonish the modern reader, if the modern reader ever looked at them, with their diligent references to all quarters of the Bible, and ample footnotes filled with quotations from the Fathers. Then, too, in those studious hours, undisturbed by guild services and charitable committees, his Reverence evolved a collection of 'Psalms and Hymns,' which, appearing in 1836, enjoyed an immense popularity, until it was superseded by 'Hymns Ancient and Modern.' The earlier production escapes many of the merits, and, perhaps, some of the defects, of the later. Long after 'Ancient and Modern' had ousted the 'Psalms and Hymns' from the churches, they still held their place in the chapels of her Majesty's prisons, and in those dreary surroundings died at last, not so very many years ago, a natural death.

Besides 'Psalms and Hymns,' his Reverence wrote a thoughtful volume on 'Purgatory,' to prove—in the first instance to his congregation—that there was no such thing. To be sure, it had never thought there was. But the startling progress of the Tractarian movement—it will be remembered that it was in 1833 that Dr. Pusey began to work on the 'Tracts' with Newman and Keble—frightened a Churchman who had hitherto been of the old 'high and dry' order, but who had moderation, conservatism, a deep mistrust of changes, not only in his mind, but in his blood and his bones. With very many of his brethren he began to think that, indeed, all paths lead to Rome. His 'Purgatory,' with most of the works inspired by that fear, is long forgotten.

But one episode connected with it deserves recollection. The

author, on its publication in 1843, sent a copy to a certain young Mr. Gladstone, then President of the Board of Trade in the Government of Sir Robert Peel, and, in his own words, though 'a hard-working official man,' 'with a decided predominance of religious over secular interests.'

The letter in which he acknowledged the book is curious, not only as an early example of his famous enigmatic style, but as giving his opinion on a subject of touching interest and consequence, surely, to all men—Prayers for the Dead :—

18 Carlton House Terrace :
Sexagesima Sunday, 1848.

REV. SIR,—I have postponed acknowledging the receipt of your work on the doctrine of Purgatory, of which you were so good as to present me with a copy on its publication, by no means from indifference to your kindness, but through the desire to be in a condition to return my thanks with a due appreciation of the volume, and therefore after having perused it, which I have now done.

It would be great presumption in me to speak of it otherwise than with the greatest submission ; yet I feel myself indebted to you, not only as an individual for an act of courtesy, but also as a member of the Church for opposition offered with so much temper, charity, and learning to a false and at the same time a subtle and attractive doctrine. May it please God to bless the effort you have made.

I am tempted to suggest to you, with reference to the closing paragraphs of Chapter VII, a subject for thought, which has often occurred to my own mind. Does not the doctrine of habits, as taught by Bishop Butler, on the power of action in the formation of character, taken in connection with the undoubted truth of the joy and felicity of the souls of the just, seem to render it a rational and probable opinion, though of course it cannot thus become a tenet of religion, that their state is one of progressiveness ; and if so, does not the inference arise that it is as such within the possible range of legitimate subjects of prayer ?

I beg you will not suppose that I look for an answer ; you will be well able to use the suggestion, if it be of the smallest weight, and to follow it out.

I have the honour to be, Rev. Sir, your obliged and faithful servant.

W. E. GLADSTONE.

But, besides books and sermons, his Reverence's long days saw a certain amount—to be sure, no very great amount—of parish visiting. It is true that City parishes, having then a larger resident population, afforded more scope for parochial work than they do now. But in those days the parson was regarded as the physician of the soul, exactly in the same sense as the doctor is the physician of the body ; except in illness, people did not expect the services of either the one or the other.

True, in that pre-sanitary age, small-pox, cholera, and typhus still made their dreadful appearance even in the healthiest city in the world. Mr. Hall had all his life, and acknowledged

that he had, a great fear of death. But in the times of those visitations, his calm, cheerful face bent over many a sick bed, and he showed daily what is, after all, the highest form of courage—to be afraid, and to act as if one had no fear at all.

But it was not only, or chiefly, the parish that demanded spiritual ministrations—or, should one rather say, ministrations that were not so much spiritual as plain, practical, and good?

The four little girls stood in a row in the serious study every morning for half an hour, while Papa expounded the Catechism, and then rewarded the catechised with a sweetmeat out of a jar on the mantelpiece, or a joke out of his genial heart. But their mother was their teacher *par excellence*. In the drawing-room upstairs, in the dark London afternoons, while Papa dozed comfortably in a solid armchair by the fire, she instructed the four small creatures (each seated on a bead footstool by her sofa) in their duty to God and their neighbour, and in the 'gentle bigotries' of her own simple faith; and then, as recreation, read aloud that delicious and impressive classic of the Early-Victorian nursery, 'The Three Bears'; or Papa took two of the audience

('I cannot do with more than two
To give a hand to each')

to Covent Garden to buy flowers for the party in the evening.

The party in the evening! It is in his sociability, and his sociabilities, in the quantity and the quality of his play as much, or much more, than in the quantity and the quality of his work, that this Parson of the Thirties differed from his brethren of to-day. Amen Corner was a very nest of modest entertainments. Mr. Hall could have been engaged 'fourteen dinners deep,' like Sterne, had he been so minded. As it was, on many and many an evening he buttoned himself into his great-coat, put his neat roll of songs ('Phyllis is My Only Joy,' and 'The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington') under his arm, and trotted across the Churchyard to meet Theodore Hook at Barham's, or slipped into Sydney Smith's residentiary house for the weekly party he always gave when in residence.

Sometimes his Reverence would 'say grace over the turtle' of a City Company for a brother parson—he was not himself Chaplain to any of the Companies—or spend an evening at the newly founded Garrick Club with Barham, who was an original member of the Club, and had written the words of the glee sung

at its opening festival. Sometimes there was a dinner—a massive dinner indeed—at the house of a City parishioner and merchant; and his Reverence and Madam, with her fine Cashmere shawl (the present of a brother-in-law in India) on her slight shoulders, went thither in a hackney coach.

But Madam only rarely accompanied her husband. Her increasing family and her fragile health often prevented her. A story runs how, on a Saturday night, his Reverence, just starting out for a dinner-party, called up the stairs to her to make a diligent search for dry bones in his absence—the Dry Bones being, in fact, the title of a sermon (itself partaking a little of the quality of the bones, perhaps) concerning the Valley of Dry Bones in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, which his Reverence proposed to preach on the following morning.

Once or twice a week No. 3 Amen Corner had a dinner itself. The picture of the old wood-panelled dining-room, with the well-laden table lit by candles in solid silver candlesticks, with the red curtains cosily drawn about the windows, the fire ablaze, and the good master of the house vastly enjoying himself decanting liberal quantities of his fine old port and brown sherry before the arrival of the guests, is pleasant and not imaginary. When Sydney Smith was one of the diners he would expressly arrive a full ten minutes too soon, run up to the nursery at the top of the house, take a small girl on each knee, and delight to expend on a few little children, and the baby boy crowing for joy of life in a cot in the corner, the inimitable drollery and the stream of irresistible cleverness and nonsense which only the night before, perhaps, had been the *pièce de résistance* of the dinner at Holland House. One of the little girls still recollects—better even than the sweets in his pocket—the *bonhomie* and kindness of the shrewd, manly face, and knows, as his own children and intimates knew, that Sydney Smith's wit was not his finest quality.

When he came down to the drawing-room he must often have found Madam—with the filmy scarf over her shoulders, and the brown silk frock of her portrait—talking to a guest who was constantly staying in the house, Edward Harley, the fifth Earl of Oxford and Mortimer.

An old and a very kind friend of Madam's family, the Jeffreys, my Lord had been, not so very long ago, the boon companion of George IV; famous on the turf, where he would ride his own horses, particularly a celebrated mare, Victoria, and as having

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made a very youthful and unhappy marriage, and, with his wife, quickly dissipated a great fortune. He had been also the friend of Byron—the Byron student will not have forgotten that it was on Lady Oxford's note-paper the poet wrote the 'cutting dismissal' to Lady Caroline Lamb, which that impossible person afterwards published, at least in part, in 'Glenarvon'; while 'Ianthe,' to whom Byron dedicated 'Childe Harold,' was Lady Charlotte, Lord Oxford's daughter, then a little girl of ten years old, and afterwards Lady Charlotte Bacon.

Now (in 1835, when he made Mr. Hall his chaplain), the Earl was about sixty-two years old—with the lean, rather sardonic face, drooping hook nose, and bright close-set eyes which have been reproduced in his miniature, and had greatly retrenched his fortunes and sobered his life. If his youth had been wild, its faults were between him and his God. Amen Corner had only to remember the most delicate and thoughtful kindness, and that he bore to his chaplain a sincere and lifelong friendship, and to the chaplain's wife the tenderest affection and respect.

Very constantly among the diners was 'Thomas Ingoldsby'—a host in himself; exuberant in his geniality; buoyant, farcical, irrepressible; with a humour and playfulness not unlike Charles Lamb's; an excellent fund of anecdote of his own, and a charming capacity for listening to the much less excellent anecdotes of others.

Here, too, came very frequently another brother minor canon of the host's, a Mr. Bennett, a hot-spirited, adventurous cleric, who had worn the red coat before he donned the black, and had seen service in the Peninsular War under Wellington. His experiences in the fearful storming and sack of Badajoz left so terrible an impression on a sensitive mind, that he had not only the greatest dislike to speak of the event, but even to hear a reference made to it.

Another guest, an occasional inmate of No. 3, was Harry White, Madam's nephew, sometime ensign in the 44th Regiment—Lord Oxford having obtained him the commission. Wild, dissipated, engaging, generous, and irresponsible—having, indeed, all the faults which make a man lovable, and none of the severer virtues which make him respectable—his future history outvied many a romance. Having seen service in India, he sold out of the army after an *esclandre* in which he was certainly not blameless, and entirely squandered an excellent substance in riotous living.

At one time, his minor canon uncle was allowing him his whole means of existence; at his worst, the doors of the house in Amen Corner were never shut in his face. As he passed them, the boy's grosser vices seem to have dropped from him like a mantle. In Madam's drawing-room, and the purity of her presence, the oaths left his lips and the guile his heart. The little girls had never a jollier or a more harmless companion. Then, one day when he was financially at his lowest ebb, Master Harry, being at the Bank of England, finds most dramatically and unexpectedly lying there, as unclaimed dividends, a few hundreds belonging to his father. He bought an outfit for Natal, took a farewell of Amen Corner, which was at once passionately sorrowful for the past and incurably hopeful for the future, and started anew—which, alas! is seldom of any use without starting a new character. He married abroad, beneath him; fell into the old faults, drink, debt, dissipation, and became at last a common labourer in a brickfield. In October 1863, the Bishop of the Orange Free State recorded in his Journal that he found him digging a well. 'Drinking had been his ruin. I told him of his uncle's (Mr. Hall's) death; it was touching to see the rough man in tears. He had been brought up by his uncle, and said "He taught me all the good I ever knew"; he seemed to feel his degradation.' The novel 'Flotsam,' by Henry Seton Merriman, is founded on the character and the adventures of Harry White. The last pages of the book, recording his death in the waggon as he was being taken to the missionary station, are literally accurate.

But when Amen Corner gave its little dinners in the thirties, Ensign Harry was at his liveliest and handsomest. Add to the guests already mentioned two or three perfectly amiable and charming young ladies, with curls and an obliging ability to play on the harp after dinner, and the party would be complete at eight or ten persons.

Numerically was, certainly, the only sense in which it was a 'little dinner.' It began by a solid and life-giving soup, which Mr. Hall himself doled out generously from a vast silver tureen, presented to him by his grateful parishioners at St. Bene't's, who had caused an inscription to be engraved on it expressing their sentiments in terms even more handsome than the tureen itself. The feast continued in the substantial manner in which it had begun. As for drinking, the age of excess was everywhere passing, and among this company had certainly passed. But it

is not the less true that—except Sydney Smith, who was as much in advance of his age in his views on temperance as he was in his views on the duties of a parish priest—no one saw gout at the bottom of the second glass as everybody does now, and that, instead, generous wine and plenty of it had almost certainly been recommended by the faculty to the guests to a man, as a cure for all the diseases they had, and a preventive of all they might have.

There was, then, much complimentary drinking of wine with one's neighbour or one's *vis-à-vis*; a lingering over the courses which no one would tolerate now; and, when the women had left—the Early-Victorian woman may be described as having, as a rule, neither helped nor hindered conversation—the real business of the evening, talk.

In all the differences, great and many as they are, between the diners of the thirties and the diners of to-day, nothing is so different as the nature of their humour.

There is a kind of youthful joyousness in the sallies of Sydney Smith and of Barham—Sydney Smith was at this time quite an elderly man—a sort of frank and bubbling jollity in their cleverness which seems to be wholly extinct at middle-aged dinner-parties now. The reason, partly, why their wit is still so delightful to us is that it was so obviously delightful to them, and then, as now, they gave pleasure because they felt it. Mine host—every now and then holding up his glass of port to the lamplight to test its fine colour—certainly took a delight in his guests and their conversation, which was as spontaneous and as unclouded as a boy's.

Lord Oxford had run through all the follies and festivals of youth; but it does not appear that at these gatherings he ever struck a note of cynicism or bitterness. For an hour or two, he was again eager and sanguine. And, be sure, Ensign Harry's jolly laugh rang out often enough.

When the party came to politics, as it always did, Sydney Smith's rousing Whiggism was constantly stirring up the sluggish Tory blood of the Cathedral Close; and, in place of the languid, hopeless disgust with the contemptible folly of the opposite party—which is modern political opinion—there was his Reverence's healthy indignation with persons who wanted to alter and complicate so pleasant and simple a world.

For it *was* a pleasant and simple world. When the talk grew graver, and Mr. Hall and his friends faced the deeper problems of

life, they nearly all brought to them the honest and comfortable conviction that whatever is, is right; and, instead of the modern philanthropist's hot zeal against unequal social conditions, believed firmly that it was Providence which had made men rich or poor, and desired that they should keep so.

In the drawing-room afterwards, Lord Oxford bent over the fire, early Broadwood while Madam sang; then his Reverence, sitting in his chair by the fire, with his legs crossed, and perfectly free from embarrassment or affectation, trilled out 'Phyllis is My Only Joy' to his wife's accompaniment; one of the young ladies, after the usual pressings and coy refusals, played on the harp; Harry roared a rousing martial air; and presently Sydney Smith discovered on the upper landing two little girls in their nightgowns who had stolen out of bed to listen to the music.

There was no wonder that No. 3 often repeated evenings so enjoyable and innocent; and that Nos. 1 and 2, and several numbers in the Churchyard, responded by entertainments equally pleasurable.

But if the week-days were more easy, sociable, and lively than clerical week-days are apt to be now, so were the Sundays more staid and sober.

Every Sunday morning—unless he was himself on duty at the Cathedral, or was doing deputy duty there for an absent canon—Mr. Hall, with three or four of the little daughters and a couple of their highly respectable attendants in his wake, walked briskly across the Churchyard, with a fat sermon in a case in a capacious pocket, to the Church of St. Bene't, Paul's Wharf. There he compensated, as did many of his brethren, for the absence of services during the week, by the length of the two he held on Sunday. The sweet singing voice which had charmed his friends after dinner was not of the slightest use in church, and of little in the Cathedral. The minor canon's was always a life post in those comfortable old days; as he seldom had to sing, it naturally did not matter if his voice cracked, or if he had never had one; while at St. Bene't's, whenever the Prayer Book offered the choice of 'sing' or 'say,' the Rector followed the universal custom and chose 'say' invariably.

Yet, though this restless age would find the service he conducted quite intolerably tedious and dull, not so that. Not a few of the learned members of Doctors' Commons, situated hard by, were regular and attentive attendants at St. Bene't's.

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Many a worthy citizen of credit and renown brought his wife and family to their parish church and comfortably upholstered pew each Sunday morning and afternoon, subscribed to the beautifully rare charities connected with his place of worship, put his guinea handsomely in the plate—by no means presented to him every week—and, when Mr. Hall mounted the three-decker for his sermon, with the round cheerfulness of his good Sunday face shining above the white bands and the black gown, actually settled down not to sleep, but to listen.

This, at least, seems proved by the fact that the congregation of St. Bene't's were always asking their Rector to reprint his sermons. One such reprint he sent to Sydney Smith, who thanked him therefor in a brief note, quite characteristic, and written on that very deep pink note-paper which he told Miss Berry was 'called in the shops *criminal blush demy*. There is an *innocent blush demy* which is cheaper.'

DEAR SIR,—I am extremely obliged to you for the gift of your Sermon, which I will read with care and attention.

You are very fortunate to find so much favour in the Eyes of your congregation as to be desired to print your Sermon. I have no communication with my Congregations except a kind of Look which seems to request I should be as brief as possible.

Ever yours,

SYDNEY SMITH.

Brevity was certainly not the soul of Mr. Hall's discourses. But they bear ample evidence of the thought and the diligence that he had put into their composition, as well as of the sober devoutness and the real piety of his nature; and the patience—that lost virtue—with which his people listened to him was a virtue rewarded.

True, the sermons cannot have been particularly intelligible to the free seats. But that mattered less because the free seats in those days were nearly always empty.

As to the afternoon service at St. Bene't's, nothing could have been more soothing, with the twilight creeping through the plain glass windows; the pleasant tones of the preacher rising and falling; the good little girls in the Rectory pew, with their little white-trousered legs sticking out straight in front of them; and presently, the mumbling clerk lighting the unsymbolic candles on the Table, and the whole congregation singing the eight verses of the evening hymn (No. 20 in the Rector's Psalmody) before it parted.

One memorable Sunday in 1837, St. Bene't's was draped in thick funereal black in memory of his Majesty King William IV, just deceased, these black hangings being, as always, the eventual perquisite of the Rector of the church, and, in the case of the rich City parishes, a handsome and costly perquisite indeed.

The next year, in the early dawn of a June morning, Madam (enjoying a brief spell of better health) and the Chaplain-in-Ordinary went off to the Abbey to a famous coronation. Their little boy's earliest recollection is of his mother bending over his bed to say good-bye to him, dressed at that untoward hour in full gala dress, feathers and turban, with the very modest parure of the Jeffreys' jewels on her slender neck.

That better health did not last long. The dark humidity of many London winters, the fashion of treating the decline of which she had long suffered by a rigid exclusion of fresh air, had their natural results. In the summer, when the whole family spent its holidays in the country at Eywood, Lord Oxford's place in Herefordshire, the invalid had grown temporarily stronger. But by the end of the thirties Dr. Keate, Surgeon-General to King William IV and to Queen Victoria, and brother to the famous choleric, kindly John Keate, headmaster of Eton, was constantly in and out of Amen Court.

In the winter of 1843 he sent his patient to Hastings. She posted down in an invalid carriage, with the kindly old Earl of Oxford sitting on the box and taking charge of the small cavalcade. But the change effected nothing. In the spring she came back to Amen Corner to die; and died, grieving to leave motherless her little flock, but sustained by an absolute and unquestioning faith in the wisdom and the mercy of God, a faith which she bequeathed—a rich legacy indeed—to her children. She lies buried in the vaults of St. Bene't's, Paul's Wharf.

Into the grief of her warmhearted husband, who had depended on her even more than he knew, one need not pry. Sorrows are sanctuaries; rash he, be he friend or biographer, who lifts the veil.

For many months after her death Lord Oxford had her whole little family with him at Eywood, gave them governesses and masters, and left with them for their lives the memory of a friend.

A few years later his Reverence gave up his living of St. Bene't's, the Dean and Chapter presenting him, in exchange, with the better living of Tottenham. To that (then) charming suburb, with

its comfortable and substantial houses in fruit-walled gardens, he retired with his family and lived for some years, always retaining, and doing the work of, his minor canonry. Meanwhile, No. 3 Amen Court—much later on it became the residence of Canon Liddon—was not the only house in the Corner that had seen changes. In 1839, Sydney Smith, coming into a substantial fortune, went to Green Street, Grosvenor Square; and the Barhams came across the Churchyard to the witty Canon's house in the Corner. The old landmarks were fast being removed; and the age when, as has been aptly said, even the clergy did not know they had a mission, was succeeded by the age when every layman is comfortably, or uncomfortably, conscious that it is his personal and immediate duty to reform the world.

Mr. Hall lived to the dawn of these strenuous times. But they did not affect him. To be just, kind, and upright; to be cheerful and sociable; to be faithful over a few things and not anxious about the many with which he had not been entrusted; to be merciful to the sinner as he himself humbly hoped for mercy, and true to the plain faith he had learnt at his mother's side—these were the aims he realised.

When he came to die he found that the long-dreaded King of Terrors had none; and the face of Death was to him as the face of life had been—the face of a friend.

*PRISCILLA OF THE GOOD INTENT.¹**A ROMANCE OF THE GREY FELS.*

BY HALLIWELL SUTCLIFFE.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE QUIET WALK HOME.

LINSALL was staid enough throughout the year, but, like Peggy Mathewson, she made the most of her big holiday. The cobbled inn-front, wide as it was, could hold no more farmers' gigs; the stableyard was full of traps; and those who rode in late on sturdy horses were forced to seek billets for their nags wherever a friendly farmstead offered hospitality.

The bridge, arched like a delicate, grey eyebrow above the peat-brown river, was white with faces which looked constantly toward the inn, as if watching for some spectacle. The Squire was there, and his womenfolk, rubbing shoulders with yeomen and their wives; farm-hinds pressed close against the stonework of the bridge, and held their bairns up to see what was going forward. The green below was crowded, too, and men were running up the pastures that stepped briskly from the roadway to the moor. Only the road itself, from the fields right down to the inn-front, was clear of onlookers, and the dust of the highway showed hot and white as it made a lane between the folk.

It was time for the fell-race, and there were few dwellers in this land of climbing fields and overtopping hills whose hearts did not beat faster at prospect of the race. Of all their sports it was most in keeping with their daily lives. Each farmer, when he went to call the cattle into mistal, when he ploughed, or won the hay-crop, was compelled to do his share of climbing, for all the fields of Linsall, save a few that lay along the river's level, strode straight uphill, straight up and down again. This fell-race, indeed, was not so much a pastime as a test of endurance

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which had grown naturally out of their daily occupation, and the winner of it was counted the great man of the year.

'Reuben,' said Peggy o' Mathewson's, slipping a hand through his arm as they stood on the green, 'the race is to start i' less than a half-hour, and I've a fancy.'

'Let's know it, lass. 'Tis not to-day I'm saying no to you, I reckon.'

'You must run, Reuben—and you must win.'

'You're jesting? Why, I'm all out of practice—'

'Oh, you're tough and hard! I've only to look at you to see you're in condition. You used to win it easy enough i' the old days, Reuben—try, just to please me.'

Gaunt laughed good-naturedly, and began to push a way through the crowd. 'I'll do my best, Peggy; but I sha'n't be best pleased if I come home second, after being reckoned an easy first so long.'

He borrowed running-gear from the landlord of the inn, and a low hum went up from the crowd when they saw him step out again into the sunlight. For it was known that one of the big fell-racers from the Lake Country had entered for to-day's struggle, and until now there had seemed no chance that Linsall could keep the honour within its own borders. At a meeting less happy-go-lucky and more set about with rules than this, there might have been trouble touching Gaunt's late entry. But Linsall's rule was that till the moment when the starter shouted 'Go!' any man was free to take his place along the line of competitors.

As Gaunt moved quickly to his place he was stopped by a shabby-genteel man, whose appearance seemed oddly out of keeping with the ruddy farmer-folk about him.

'Beg pardon, Mr. Gaunt, but you mean to run to-day?' whispered the stranger.

Gaunt nodded; he had followed horse-racing too long to have any doubt as to what was coming.

'You'll upset all our bets, then, and poor men have to make their living. See now, Mr. Gaunt, you're well off, I know, but the richest need more, and if you've a mind to fall out of the race—'

Reuben Gaunt, if by force of nature he was a crooked man when his affections were in case, was scrupulously straight in other matters. He had a plentiful lack of self-guidance, but no

meanness ; and the suggestion of the shabby-genteel man touched his temper to the quick.

'Here, lads,' he broke in, turning to the group of strapping lads who stood nearest to him, 'here's one who wants me to run crooked for the sake of a five-pound note. Just cool his heels for him in the river.'

It was all over before the crowd had time to realise the meaning of the uproar. The intruder into Linsall's peace was carried at a running pace to the pool under the bridge, was thrown in and seen to clamber up the further bank and seek cover like a fox. The farm-lads laughed and shrugged their shoulders, and went back to see the start of the race. They had upheld Linsall's reputation for a race run fairly and with keenness, and there was little chance that other out-at-elbows gentry would try to-day to disturb that reputation.

Gaunt took his place at the starting-line ; there were nine of them—lean and wiry fellows all, since upland farming seldom makes for too much flesh—and next to Reuben was the Lake Country runner, Bownas by name. Long in the limb, lithe and spare in the body, he dwarfed Gaunt by a good four inches, and seemed built for this business of capturing the race.

There were five minutes to go before the signal for the start, and Bownas looked Gaunt up and down. Finally he put out a hand.

'You're Mr. Gaunt ? Pleased to run against ye. I've heard o' ye. Better a tough race than a slack one any day.'

Gaunt's spirits were rising every moment. He laughed as he took the other's hand. 'By the Lord, we'll show them what running means, if they've never known it before.'

He was heartened by the murmurs of the crowd behind him. 'Gaunt's running to-day,' said one, with a hint of hero-worship in his voice. 'We'll keep the winner i' our own country yet,' said another. The shabby-genteel man's assumption that his bets were in danger had been in itself a tribute to his skill. Sympathy was a spur to Gaunt always, and he felt that the crowd was with him.

'You've to win, Reuben ! Make no mistake o' that,' murmured Peggy from behind. 'I wouldn't have 'ticed ye to run at all if I hadn't been sure of your winning.'

He turned and looked her in the eyes. 'I begin to fancy I

'shall, Peggy,' he said; 'but 'tis long odds to put me up at a minute's notice against Bownas of Shap.'

'Ready, are ye?' cried the starter. 'Ready?—Go!'

There was no excitement at the beginning of the race, and this too was in keeping with the dalesfolk, who liked their pleasure to be long-drawn out. It was only the raw youngsters who showed signs of their paces along the dusty line of road; Gaunt and Bownas trotted quietly at the rear, remembering that a good deal of ground had to slip under their feet before the last swift struggle home.

The haze had lifted now, and the sunlight lay so keen on moor and pasture that those on the bridge, the remotest point of vantage, could see each figure as it climbed the pastures, could follow the men when they gained the darker background of the moor.

Not one of the nine was running now, and three at least were creeping painfully up the breast of the moor.

'Gaunt's at his old game,' said one of the crowd.

'Ay, he takes it straight as it comes. Sakes, how he sticks to his business!'

It was not then that eagerness began to show itself among the onlookers. Much depended on the downhill scamper, but more on that stubborn climb up the hill-face which, from below and in the sun glare, showed steep as a house-wall.

Bownas of Shap was playing his old game, too. They could see him turning warily along the dingles, instead of facing the high bluffs. He counted on saving wind and gaining speed, as he had done in other struggles of the kind; but he had not run against Reuben Gaunt before.

The onlookers—and every face now was turned to the moor with fine expectancy—could see Gaunt keeping a straight line for the summit, though now and then he seemed to be pulling himself forward by sheer grip of the tough heather that hindered his feet no less than did the steepness of the moor.

They were lost for awhile, Bownas and Gaunt, in the shadow of the highest ridge. At the ridge-top, pencilled clear against the hard blue of the sky, stood the turning-post and the man who guarded it. Then, out of the shadowed space, Gaunt's figure showed; he had gone straight as a gun-shot, and, without turn or halt, had reached the flag.

Peggy could not rest quiet on the road below. She had climbed to the brink of the moor by now, and three or four of the crowd had followed her. It was Peggy's day, and she wished it to be full. Gaunt might be this and that, she told herself, her eyes fixed on the moor above; but she would forgive him fickleness and all if she could dance on the green to-night, and know that he was the winner of the race.

'Gaunt climbs like a wild-cat,' said a tough old yeoman, standing at Peggy's side.

'Climbs like a man,' answered Peggy, and kept her eyes on the hill-top.

Bownas had reached the flag by now, and had turned to follow Gaunt down the moor. From below, Peggy o' Mathewson's could hear the eager uproar of the crowd. None thought of the seven stragglers who followed; it was a race between the homelander and the 'foreigner,' and Gaunt himself, though the blood was surging in his ears, could hear a stifled echo of the roar that meant goodwill to him.

Gaunt had been used to say that he won his races because his wind was a special gift, in token that his legs were short. He needed the gift now, for, out of practice as he was, the straight, unswerving climb had punished him.

Bownas was still following his bent, downhill as uphill. He chose the gentler slopes, while Gaunt ran helter-skelter down, straight for the wall that guarded the pastures from the moor.

'The wild-cat's won!' shouted the old yeoman at Peggy's ear. 'He's a furlong forrarder, and all easy going now.'

A long, brown line of shale lay in Gaunt's path. He would not turn aside, but trusted to his old trick of sliding down it, feet foremost, with the shingle scattering round his knees.

'Oh, be durned!' muttered the yeoman. ''Tis all over wi' Gaunt! Just when he had the race i' his hands, an' all.'

Peggy's face was white, for she had seen the runner trip against a stone which did not yield to his foot, as the shale had done. So great was Gaunt's speed that he could not think of checking himself; head over heels he went, and landed on his feet again as if by a miracle. For a second or two he stood dazed by the shock, and Bownas got to within fifty yards of him. Then, shaking himself together, and setting his face as hard as a flint, Gaunt started down the moor again.

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to Peggy. 'Glad he hasn't done as mich to-day. Want to see him win, I.'

The runners were scaling the wall between moor and pasture now, and Gaunt was a trifle the quicker in getting over. He passed so close to Peggy that she could have touched him.

'Run!' she panted. 'Reuben, you have it! You have it, lad!'

He heard her, and so did Bownas of Shap; and both men raced forward with a quickened sense of rivalry.

It was now that the crowd lost all restraint, save just as much as was needed to keep a clear path to the inn. From the bridge, and from the green, and from the inn-front—where men were standing on tip-toe in the gigs to get a clearer view—a deafening clamour rose. It was no spasmodic cheering, broken by silences, but a steady, ever-growing roar, like the thunder of a stream when snow is loosened from the hills. Never since this yearly battle of the fells first took its place in Linsall's history had such a race been watched. The time between out and home was shortened by five minutes than the fastest record known; but, more than this, there were two men left to fight it out to the end—two men who came with swift, lopping strides through the dust of the roadway—two men whose faces at another time would have been terrible to see, so contorted were they with weariness, and desperation, and fierce effort to keep up.

Bownas led by a few feet now, and the onlookers were making frenzied calls to Gaunt to make a last spurt for it. The uproar rose to the hills that hemmed in Linsall village, and it broke against the fells with muffled echo. It was a moment when a man might well prove stronger than himself, and a strange gaiety caught Reuben unawares. There were still two hundred yards to go, and he saw that Bownas was content to keep his lead, and was waiting for his last big effort until nearer home. Gaunt could not wait; he gathered all his strength, and glanced past Bownas with sudden speed, and crossed the winning-line with an impetus he could not check. The inn-doorway was in front of him—otherwise he would have crashed against the wall in his blind rush—and he ran down the long passage and checked himself when he reached the settle at the far end, and sat with his head between his hands. A darkness and great sickness closed about him for awhile, then he lifted his head, and saw the landlord standing near him with an air of much goodwill and some anxiety.

'Bring me something—something in a mug, Jonas,' said Gaunt, with a feeble smile.

Jonas laughed, as he patted the other on the back. 'Not just sure whether ye've any inward parts left at all, Mr. Gaunt. Want to cure that durned, queer feel of emptiness? Oh, bless ye, I know it; I've run fell-races before—but niver as ye ran to-day! God bless me, ye've the legs of a deer!'

Peggy had seen from the pasture-fields how Gaunt came home far down below; and, when she reached the village, it was to find the hero of the year being carried shoulder-high by six of the Linsall men. No leader of old, returning from victory through a crowded capital, could have claimed more honour than Reuben Gaunt. Unprepared, to gratify a lass's whim, he had won a contest that would go down in Garth's history, so long as there were folk to sit beside the hearth o' nights and talk of it.

Peggy o' Mathewson's had had her wish. A buoyancy, an exultation like Gaunt's own as he covered those last ten-score yards, possessed her. It was the woman's pride, unalterable through changing generations, that 'her man' had won his battle.

When the evening came, and the sun dropped low over Linsall Moor, and the moon climbed big and round over the shoulder of Harts Fell, the green was full of couples dancing to the tune of three fiddlers perched on Mother Lambert's empty counter. And Peggy, though the men pressed round her like a swarm of bees, would dance with few but Gaunt.

The scene was fairy-like in its remoteness from the humdrum round of work. The fells on the one side were white and magical; the moor on the other showed a dark, jagged line of mystery; and between moor and fell, Linsall village lay steeped in fleecy moonlight, her bridge a slender arch of gossamer that spanned a stream of pearl and blue. There was no sound, save the gentle thud of feet on the grass, the squeak of the fiddles, the low tranquil laugh of some country lass as she heard what her lover stooped to tell her in the pauses of the dance.

When Gaunt and Peggy left the green at last, and struck up the pastures toward home, they were followed by much nodding of heads and wagging of tongues.

'Gaunt's not content wi' winning the race, 'twould seem,' said one.

'Nay,' said another, 'he seems like as he's set on winning

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Peggy o' Mathewson's as well. There'll be lile trouble i' that, if the look in her face be aught to go by.'

Peggy and her man moved steadily up the field-track, then more quietly when they reached the heath.

'Twas here you ran so well,' said Peggy, her eyes shining with some great unreasoning happiness.

'Twas because you asked it,' answered Gaunt, slipping her arm through his own as they turned to look down on moonlit Linsall. The faint screech of fiddles reached them, reedy as the breeze that blew fitfully about the heather-stems. She was silent, and Gaunt felt that she was trembling. 'Why, what's amiss? Surely you're not cold on such a night?'

'Oh, it is naught, Reuben! I've had my day—as full a one as ever I could wish for—and I'm frightened, somehow, to go back, and begin to churn, and bake, and wash, and tend the fowls.'

'I can ease you of all that.'

Her eyes were soft, and full of the tenderness which life had tried its best to kill. She seemed about to speak, but checked herself.

'Will you listen, Peggy?'

'Oh, we must hurry, Reuben. Come away over the moor; there's mother wondering all this while whatever can have come to me.'

He did not understand her mood, did not understand the withdrawal which was at once proud and full of mute appeal. They crossed the moor in a silence broken only by the scuffle of a sheep as they awakened it in passing, by the sudden whirr of a cock grouse as he rose from the ling and went barking *to-bac, to-bac, to-bac* across the moor.

It was Peggy who broke the silence. They had reached the deep glen above Ghyll Farm, and she paused at the rowan-tree which branched across the dancing stream. She had spent long hours under shadow of the rowan before and after she had learned her love for Gaunt; the place was friendly to her, for it was haunted by familiar years.

She stood straight in the moonlight, facing him. The rowan-leaves threw feathery shadows across her face. 'Reuben,' she said, 'what's amiss with us both?'

'Why, naught, lile lass. You want to be free of the churning

and the rest? Well, there's Marshlands waiting for ye, if you choose to come as mistress.'

'Reuben!'

He could not tell whether sorrow or keen gladness lay underneath that cry. He knew Peggy o' Mathewson's had never moved him as she did to-night.

'Reuben, I'm all lost on the moor,' she went on quickly. 'I love the peat ye tread on, and yet I doubt ye. I've seen ye a man to-day, Reuben, and yet I'm wondering whether it can last. The mood's on ye to make me mistress yonder. Ay, but to-morrow? Love goes and comes wi' some folk, but it stays wi' women such as me, make no doubt o' that.'

'It will stay with me. Are you going with the rest o' the flock, lile one—bleating me down, when I try to get my feet on a straight road?'

Peggy o' Mathewson's stood silent. The moonlight, dappled by the swaying rowan-leaves, showed a beauty that was scarcely of this world. Like the weather-stained mother who waited for her coming, down yonder at the farm, Peggy had peeped into a bigger life than this.

Suddenly she lost her straightness, and was sobbing in Gaunt's arms. 'You'll be good to me, Reuben? 'Tis all or naught wi' me, and you can break my heart, or mend it, just as you please. Oh, I should take shame to talk to ye like this—but I'll come to Marshlands wi' no half-love fro' ye.'

Gaunt felt a new warmth, a generous impulse, not only to take this passionate, headstrong lass to Marshlands, but to make her happy there. He told her as much in few words, and the answering touch of her hands as he held them roused something manlier, more robust, in the man's contrary nature.

They stayed awhile under the rowan, and Peggy touched its smooth trunk from time to time.

'I'm happy to-day,' she laughed, 'just happy, Reuben; and I'm touching rowan-wood while I say it.'

There was a light in the kitchen of Ghyll Farm when they came across the croft, and at the porch-door they could see Widow Mathewson, her gaunt figure softened by the moonlight.

'So ye've been wi' Gaunt? I guessed as much,' was the mother's greeting. There was little complaint in her tone, but her usual half-sad, half-bitter acceptance of the day's troubles as they came.

Peggy was not contrite. 'I'd finished the baking, mother, and

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I knew ye'd guess I was off to Linsall Fair. Mother, I never had such a day—and Reuben won the fell-race.'

'Ay, he would. Give him a bit o' straight running for foolishness' sake, an' he's clever; 'tis when ye want him to do summat wi' sense at th' back on 't that Gaunt fails ye—fails ye ivery time.'

'I want you to ask me indoors for once,' put in Reuben.

The widow looked at him curiously. Without emotion, as if she were counting up her egg-money, and finding the total right, she realised that there was a change for the better in him. His tone was grave, and he had lost his light, come-and-go air altogether.

'As ye please,' she answered, stepping aside to let him pass. 'Tis so late now for us early-to-bed folk that a bit later willun't signify.'

In grim silence she brought cake and elderberry wine from the corner cupboard, and set them on the table. Whether a guest was a welcome one or not, he must not leave without a show of hospitality.

'Just help yourself, Mr. Gaunt,' she said, with a certain stateliness that was no way out of keeping with her rough gown and weather-stained, tired face.

'Oh, by-and-by,' he said. Peggy and he were standing on either side of the hearth, and Widow Mathewson saw the confident, warm glances that passed between them. 'We've something to tell you, Mrs. Mathewson. Peggy was pleased with my running, may be—or perhaps she saw I was fondish of her—any way, she has promised to come down to Marshlands as mistress there.'

Mrs. Mathewson began to stride up and down the floor. It was her way—the man's way—when deeply moved. Folly, disaster, she had looked for whenever Gaunt had crossed their path; she was not prepared for honesty.

'See ye,' she cried fiercely, turning to meet Gaunt's eyes, 'are ye meaning this? I tell ye, we're proud, bitter-proud, up here at Ghyll. I've no man to look after Peggy—th' one I lost would have been littlish use even if he'd lived—but I was not built after a gentle pattern, Reuben Gaunt. If ye're planning some fresh bit o' devilry, I'll bid ye keep clear o' my hands. They're strong hands—when I care to use them.'

Reuben was at his ease for once in the widow's presence. This

new sense of honesty was a gentler and yet a stronger feeling than he had known since childhood.

'Tis this way,' he said quietly, 'we happen to want one another, and we're bent on getting one another.'

'Ay, ye're bent on it,' said the widow drily, not taking her eyes from Reuben's face. 'You're bent on it to-night. The full moon glammers folk, so they say. Will ye be bent on it to-morrow?'

'Mother, you're hard on Reuben!' broke in Peggy.

'No harder than he's been on me, these years and years past. Are ye playing wi' my lass, or are ye not? She's all I have, mind.'

Gaunt would take no offence. His spirits were high, and that curious sense of well-doing was with him still. 'I shall be getting things to rights at Marshlands to-morrow. A house that has had no mistress all these years will need setting straight. After that, Peggy has only to choose the day when she'll come to it.'

The widow's face softened a little, but she did not spare him. 'Very well,' she said, her fine, keen eyes reading every line of his face. 'Ay, very well, indeed, Reuben Gaunt, if ye can hold to th' same mind two days running. When I see Peggy wedded I shall believe 'at Peggy's wedded. Good-night to ye. I'm fair clemmed wi' all the day's work, while ye two were gadding over to Linsall Fair.'

Peggy went with Gaunt to the gate of the croft. 'Ne'er heed mother,' she whispered. 'Tis her way, Reuben. She'll soften to ye by-and-by.'

'I heed naught, lile lass, so long as ye're lying lile and soft i' my two arms. What a fool I've been all these years—what a fool!'

He was swept away by his passion, by the girl's free, reckless beauty and reckless tenderness. He pictured her down yonder in the lonely house at Marshlands. The liberty he had cherished—liberty to come and go as he listed, like the wind—was shorn of all attraction. There would be warmth and well-doing about his house, and ties to keep him safe from wandering.

They stood looking down the moor. The moon outlined each smooth ridge; her light was nestled in the misty vagueness of the hollows; away and away to the grey-blue of the silent sky she touched the land with witchery. And Peggy o' Mathewson's sighed.

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'Why, lass, ye're shivering,' said Gaunt, roused from his dreams of what might be.

'Oh, a goose walked over my grave,' she answered lightly. 'A silly goose, Reuben, to choose just to-day for wandering.'

She did not tell him that she feared the day's happiness, feared lest all should be changed when she woke on the morrow. Hardship was more easy to believe in, after all, and in her experience it followed pleasure always.

They watched the moor, and the tenderness, the mute, uncomplaining sorrow of the land, came close to Peggy, as to one who had known the heath from childhood.

'Reuben,' she sobbed, 'if only ye had one mind in a day, instead of fifty—or if I could care for ye less——'

'Best care for me more instead of less,' laughed Reuben. 'I've no heed myself for geese walking over a grave.'

'It was silly, I own. There, ye've had kisses enough and to last——'

'Until to-morrow.'

'Well—may be—if ye come not too early, while I'm milking the cows, or not over-late, when the house will need looking to, after all the work I've given mother to-day. There, Reuben—oh, there and there, if ye must better one good kiss—good-night, Reuben.'

Gaunt swung down the moor. The moon stood silver-gold in the middle of the blue, round sky. A sheep got up beneath his feet. He started a grouse from its bed among the heather. Far down below him he could see a light set like a little star above the porch of Marshlands.

'They're used to late home-comings o' nights,' he laughed. 'There'll be fewer such when Peggy comes to Marshlands.'

CHAPTER XVII.

WHATEVER doubt Widow Mathewson might have had of Gaunt's constancy, he himself felt none. On the morning after Linsall Fair he summoned his housekeeper, told her that Marshlands was to have a mistress at long last, and gave orders that the disused parlour, full of faded hangings and rusty furniture unrenewed since his mother came here as a bride, should be turned out in readiness for the purchases he meant to make this week in

Shepstone. The best bedroom, disused too, was to be treated in the like fashion. Now that his mind had found an anchorage, Reuben was eager, business-like, impatient of delays.

His housekeeper said little ; but she smiled often when his back was turned, and shook her head with the foreboding that was her only luxury.

'He's like a lad going off to buy a gun, or a rod, or some such toy,' was her thought. 'Oh, ay, he's keen-set on the notion, but it winnun't last more nor a week. Niver met a man to tire as soon as the master.'

Gaunt did not tire, however ; he was to and fro between Ghyll Farm and Marshlands every other day, and in between was journeying to Shepstone, with Peggy beside him, in the smart, high-wheeled gig which was known by sight to all the dalesfolk.

Widow Mathewson said little these days, save to grumble that Peggy left her three parts of the work to do ; but at last she was losing some of her distrust of Gaunt. His gaiety appealed to her, for she had known but little of it in her time ; his forgetfulness of all past differences between them was generous, though she only half admitted it. Above all, her headstrong lass showed likely to settle down at last, with a decent roof above her and the right to show that pride which was ingrained in her.

'May be he's as well as another man,' she would mutter, as she nursed her pipe by the hearth and waited for Peggy to return, 'though that's saying little enough. Come to think on 't, there's so few worth choosing that a lass is a'most bound to make a lile fool of herseln when it comes to marriage.'

They were to be married at the end of two months. That was the utmost Mrs. Mathewson would grant when Reuben pressed for an earlier day.

'If your fancy lasts for two months, it'll may be last longer,' she said drily, in answer to Gaunt's pleading. 'My lass shall be thrown at no man's head, Reuben, least of all at yours.'

To Peggy the waiting time seemed short. Her child's dreams up among the winding peat-ways of the moor, her woman's yieldings to the glamour of this first and last romance which Gaunt embodied, were of the same fibre. As day after day went by and still the dream did not yield to each day's commonplaces, she forgot her distrust of life, and took each moment as she had taken those stolen hours at Linsall Fair ; and Gaunt wondered that her beauty ripened, took a more subtle colouring, a comelier

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shape, as the days went by ; he did not know that hope was like sun-warmth to Peggy o' Mathewson's after the winter of her girlhood.

One day—it was a week after Linsall Fair—he did not take her with him to Shepstone. He had a fancy to buy a chestnut mare he knew of, and keep it as a wedding-gift for her, letting her find it unexpectedly in stable when he brought her home to Marshlands. She could ride bare-back already ; he would teach her afterwards to sit a side-saddle.

Between Garth and Shepstone he came face to face with Cilla round a bend of the dusty road, and pulled his horse up.

'You have heard the news?' he asked, feeling oddly ill at ease.

'I hear so little. It is not father's way, nor mine.' Cilla's glance rested quietly on him, and she stood a little straighter than her wont, with an air of withdrawal. 'If 'tis the fever you mean, of course we've heard of it. They talk of nothing else these days in Garth.'

'It was not the fever I meant. Do you remember that you asked me months ago to do something? We were standing at the porch-door at Good Intent.'

Cilla flushed, and moved a pace or two away. 'Yes, I remember. It was you, Mr. Gaunt, who seemed to have forgotten your promise.'

'We're to be married in October,' he said bluntly.

For a moment she hesitated, then held out her hand. 'I wish you well—indeed, I wish you both well. Though we hear so little gossip, they told me Peggy was queen o' the fair at Linsall. She deserved to be, I think.'

With a smile and a bend of the head in token of farewell, she had left him. He turned in the saddle to watch her go down the road, with her light, easy step, then plucked his horse into a trot. He was out of temper with the day, though he had begun it light-heartedly enough. His old infirmity had returned to him at sight of Priscilla ; with the best will in the world to be loyal, he was bewildered by the grace and fragrance which Cilla had brought along this dusty road. His vanity was hurt, moreover ; there had been no sign of regret or sorrow in Cilla's voice ; her friendliness and unconcern were harder to bear than any of Widow Mathewson's downright attacks had been.

Priscilla moved more slowly, once she was out of sight. She

was lingering in fancy through that day of spring when she and Gaunt had gone to Keta's Well. And she laughed at herself because the tears in her eyes were very near falling. Why should she grieve because he had done what she asked of him? Since Keta's Well and all the folly of the spring there had been the merciless heat, the ruined hay-crop, the fever that would not enter Garth as yet, though the shadow of it lay constantly about the village.

'Ah, now, there's enough that is real to be thought of,' was Cilla's way of meeting the fresh heartache. 'Father would tell me, I'm sure, that 'tis no time at all to be playing with dreams and fancies.'

Billy the Fool stood at the forge door as she passed—Billy, with the air of great business and importance which had come to him since David the Smith left him in sole charge of the forge.

'Morning, Miss Good Intent!' he said, saluting gravely. 'Terrible days for pleasuring, now that David's left me master-smith.' He nodded toward the inside of the smithy, and a tranquil grin broke across his face. 'Dan Foster's lad is blowing bellows in yonder. Te-he! I just told him to get the fire all a-glowing an' a-crackling, an' the lile chap's doing on 't! 'Tis wonderful how some folk do sweat while other-some go playing.'

'Then what will you play at to-day?' asked Cilla, her smile made up of rue and rosemary.

'Well, there's two-score iron palings waiting to be hammered into shape, like, and Fool Billy reckons he'll make a start at yond same, he will. Niver knew before what 'twas to have all this wonderful lot of play to get through with; David will laugh when he comes back. He always did say I was a queerish terrible chap when I settled to my play.'

Priscilla was apt to search deeper into life since the troubled days arrived. She looked now at Billy the Fool, and remembered the scene last April at time of rescuing the lambs; she recalled the struggle at the edge of the pool, and Widow Mathewson's tale of what had happened long ago at Marshlands; she sought in Billy's face, as older folk had done, for some answer to the riddle of his character. She found none. Unhurried, skilled at his work so long as a comrade named it play, his brown, trusting eyes looked into hers, and, if they held a secret, kept it well.

He looked again to see if Dan Foster's lad were plying the

bellows within doors; then, by force of habit, he drew out a blackened pipe, and as quietly replaced it.

'There now!' he chuckled. 'What wi' all this play about, I forgot my manners. Fancied ye had a fill o' baccy on ye, and may be a match to go wi' that same baccy. Te-he, but Billy's a fool!'

'Not so big in that way as he looks,' came a voice that went roaming down Garth street like pleasant thunder. 'What! ye're keeping Billy from his play-time? Shame on ye, Cilla.'

'Nay, she's not keeping me,' said Billy, taking Hirst's open pouch. 'Dan Foster's lad is doing all the work these days, ye understand, and 'twould make your sides split to see him working at th' old bellows.'

'We're not all as lucky as you,' said the yeoman, as he handed a match to Billy. 'Most of us have no play—and, by that token, I'm bringing a horse to be shod to-morrow.'

Billy the Fool lit his pipe. He lit it as if the length of his days promised to be old as the fells that hemmed Garth in, and he drew quiet puffs before he answered. 'Well now, Mr. Hirst, I'm right set on shoeing a horse to-morrow. After I've done wi' yond iron-palings, and after I've slept for a night in greenfields bed, as a body might say, I'll be ready for you. 'Tis rare fun shoeing a lile horse, wi' a daft lad doing all the bellows work for ye.'

Hirst passed on with a cheery laugh, and linked his arm in Cilla's as they went up to Good Intent.

'Billy is like good pasture-land,' he said, with a backward glance at the forge. 'Soft on the crust, and firm beneath. Oh, ay! David did well to leave Fool Billy in his place.'

But Cilla did not answer; her thoughts were half with David, who had left Garth when she needed him, and half with Reuben Gaunt, who hoped to keep a promise made to her.

Reuben himself drove to Shepstone, and he tried to get rid of the wish that Cilla had not crossed his path to-day—Cilla, with her witchcraft of dainty thoughts and comely living—Cilla, whose gift in life was to make folk see glamour in unexpected corners.

Shepstone was busy when he reached the town. He stabled his horse at the Norton Cross Tavern, and walked down the High Street in search of the mare he meant to get for Peggy. Half down the street he heard himself hailed by name, and turned. He saw Mother Lambert's weather-beaten face, standing behind her stall as she had stood on the green at Linsall Fair.

'Morning,' said Gaunt, with the heedless nod of old acquaintance.

He was passing on, but she checked him. 'I saw ye last at Linsall, Mr. Gaunt. D'ye mind the pedlar there?'

'Why, yes.' He was impatient, and anxious to move forward. 'I bought a fairing from him, and his face, I fancied, was more fiery with drink than usual.'

Mother Lambert looked gravely at him across the trumpery wares that covered her stall.

'Best speak no ill o' the quiet folk, sir. The pedlar's dead—dead o' the fever three days ago. It was the fever that mottled his face; an' he said to me, as he stood on the green after ye'd bought your fairing for Peggy o' Mathewson's—he owned, he did, that he didn't feel just hisselsn, like, though he meant to plod on and be merry.'

Gaunt's face was white. He had no thought of Cilla now, but remembered only the lass who had watched him win a race, the lass who had been tender to his failings and buoyant in her love for him.

'Are you speaking truth?' he asked.

'Well, yes. I mostly do, save when I've wares to sell—and business, Mr. Gaunt, is another basket of eggs, as the saying goes.'

'I've laughed at the fever-dread till now,' he said, after a troubled silence. 'I take chances of that sort as they come; but 'tis different when there's a doubt that Peggy may have caught it. Surely you've to come closer to it, and stay longer with it, than we did that day at Linsall?'

'What, for harm to come on 't? Nay! I've seen plenty o' fever i' my time, an' I tell ye that kerchief ye bought for Peggy o' Mathewson's was enough in itself to gi'e it to her. Poor Peggy! They allus said—those 'at were jealous—that her liking for bright colours would bring her to grief one day.'

Mother Lambert nodded sagely after Gaunt had left her. She had lived a hard, roving life, had long since learned to look at her neighbours with eyes unclouded by over much feeling; and she told herself now, with a quiet, impersonal wonder, that there was a real change in the man.

'Did ye see Reuben Gaunt go down the street just now?' she asked a crony who came from a neighbouring stall for gossip.

'Ay. Straight set-up, as usual, and a neat, lile figure to catch a lass's fancy. There's never much change in Gaunt.'

'Well, there is a change, and that's th' odd part on 't. He's learned to think for another first, 'stead of himself, and that

means a deal. Eh, but men are bothersome cattle! Ye think ye know 'em, right to th' back o' their minds, an' all of a sudden they turn just contrary-like.'

Gaunt bought the mare for Peggy, and gave orders that it should be sent that day to Marshlands; but he had little heart either in the bargaining or the purchase. As he walked up the High Street toward the inn again, a hearse was moving slowly to the churchyard which fronted and looked down upon the road. They told him that only one day of the last fifteen had passed without a burial, and some days there had been three or four. It was brought home to him at last that black fever was no boggart invented by mothers to frighten wayward bairns; he saw the scourge now as it really was, as a pestilence unlike all others, save the plague which many hundred years ago, folk said, had destroyed whole villages and had made thriving townships into wasted hamlets.

Indeed, the fever, in a less degree, had that power to weaken men by terror which the plague had had long since. It was market-day, and a busy day along the High Street; but uneasiness and gloom showed plainly on all but the most reckless faces, and farmer-men, ashamed of a weakness they could not control, would glance at farmer-men, seeking for the tell-tale patches of mulberry-red which spelled infection.

Gaunt opened his lungs to the breeze when he was clear of Shepstone. He knew that there was danger to himself, but had dismissed the thought; his cowardice was all for Peggy. He was glad to be out among clean fields again, with the open road in front of him and none to talk of the fever.

He walked straight up to Ghyll Farm after reaching home, and Peggy was standing at the gate of the croft, looking down the moor. She half looked for him, and for that reason had fastened the crimson kerchief round her throat; she had tied and untied it before her cracked mirror, with the honest coquetry which a woman finds when she knows that one man only has a claim to it.

Reuben saw the scarf, as soon almost as he caught sight of the waiting figure. The sunlight, stark and dry as the fields it had scorched, caught the warm colour of the kerchief.

'You look tired, Reuben,' said Peggy o' Mathewson's, after a quiet glance at his face.

'Well, yes,' he answered carelessly. 'It was a hot drive in

to Shepstone, and the fools would talk of nothing but their fever. I begin to think they're proud of it, Peggy.'

'They've got used to it, you see,' said the girl, with something of her mother's tart knowledge of the world. 'Tis queer, Reuben, how soon ye get used to a thing, even if 'tis bad, and seem to miss it when it goes.'

He scarcely heard her. His eyes were fixed on the crimson scarf, and she smiled happily as she followed his glance.

'Yes, I'm wearing your gift, lad. Mother chided me just now—said 'twas no sort of fancy-stuff to wear when there were cattle needed milking by-and-by. I said ye'd given it me at Linsall Fair, and the lile, soft beasts would milk no worse because I wore it.'

Gaunt, though he did not know it, had caught something of the panic that troubled all the folk of Shepstone. 'At the back of his mind,' as he put it to himself, he was sure that Peggy would catch no harm from the scarf at this late day; the harm was done already, or not done; yet he could not rest so long as she was wearing it.

'Peggy,' he said, 'I want that kerchief you're wearing.'

Peggy o' Mathewson's laughed, though her eyes were full of disquiet. 'Best buy another, Reuben, if you're fooling me again. I'll not let this one go to some lile fool who's turned her blue eyes on ye and made geese seem swans.'

So then he told her—the sun lay merciless, low down to Wind-over Crag by this time—that Pedlar Joe had the fever on him when he sold the kerchief; and again she laughed.

'Is that all, Reuben? I thought 'twas worse.' She looked down the moor, and into his face again; and her voice was soft with trouble. 'Reuben, 'tis ill when ye doubt the man ye care for. I never cared, save for you—'

Gaunt forgot the scarf, forgot the sickness, and the hearse, and the great distrust, that had peopled the High Street at Shepstone.

'Well,' he asked, 'what is amiss, then, if we're both of the same mind? Peggy, I've been fearing for you all the way home from market. I ought to take shame that a parcel of Shepstone folk can scare me.'

Down below, in Garth, Billy the Fool had done with his day's play at the forge, and had wandered out into what he named his greenfields bed. He made up the pastures and out into the open moor; and here, in a little hollow deep with heather, he lay down, turned twice or thrice till he had made a lair for himself, and breathed a sigh of sheer content.

'Tis a right queer matter to be born daft-witted,' he said to himself. 'There's folk sleeping in Garth yonder at this minute 'twixt four hot walls, and no breath o' air to help them. Only Fool Billy knows, 'twould seem, what a terrible soft bed a body's body can find right up at the top o' the world.'

He lay there on his back and watched the stars, the waning moon whose colour was ivory tinged with saffron, the quiet blue of the sky. The wise folk spoke of the moor as a lonely place, where none could sleep without fear of the ghosts that were known to haunt it. To Fool Billy it was home. If grouse were lying near him in the heather, they were friends; if the old dog-fox from Sharprise Wood chose this track for purposes connected with his larder, Billy was well acquainted with him; as for ghosts, there was only one that troubled him, and this had no dwelling among the marshes and the ling.

For an hour or more he lay, seeing God knew what of beauty and romance in the sky above him, hearing the least fret of life about the moor, and knowing well what each sound meant. Perhaps he heard other noises—low hum of the goblins as they worked for gold underground—light music of the fairies as they danced a measure in the hollow which served him as a bed. The daft-witted have privileges denied to those who in their wisdom sleep between stone walls.

Then he stirred uneasily. The one ghost that had power to trouble him stepped up the moor and lay beside him, hindering his outlook on a rarer world. It was the ghost of a memory—memory of a far-off night, bleak and gusty, when someone had knocked at the door of Marshlands, and had been turned out again into the wind and rain—memory of a woman's sobs, a man's harsh, upbraiding voice, and then a silence and a sense of bitter cold. It was all that Billy the Fool remembered of his mother's death, his own suffering. The picture itself was clear enough, but round it were grey mists that hid what went before and what followed after. The only shape that showed clear to him out of the mists, at these times of trouble, was Reuben Gaunt's trim, well-built figure. By some tangled by-path his fancy blamed Reuben, not Reuben's father, for that evil night at Marshlands.

Billy the Fool sat up on his couch of heather. His face had the look that it had worn when, on Gaunt's first return to Garth, he had thrown him over the roadway wall into a clump of nettles—

when, months since in the time of April snow, he had longed to throw his enemy into the drinking-pool.

‘They say black fever’s come nigh or thereabouts to Garth,’ he said, talking to the silence as to a well-trying comrade. ‘Well, now, it stands to reason that the fever would no way demean itself to stop at Fool Billy’s lile, snug house right up on the world’s top. It might happen, though, that it took Gaunt o’ Marshlands on the way.’

He was pleased with the conceit, and presently the grey mist covered all the picture of wrong-doing. Like a child who was ready for sleep, Fool Billy blinked at the stars and the waning moon. His friend, the dog-fox, passed that way and yapped a friendly greeting, and Billy answered. Then he looked up at the stars again, and a peace beyond wise men’s understanding closed his eyelids. He slept as children do, and the smell of the heather was in his nostrils like a benediction.

(To be continued.)

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